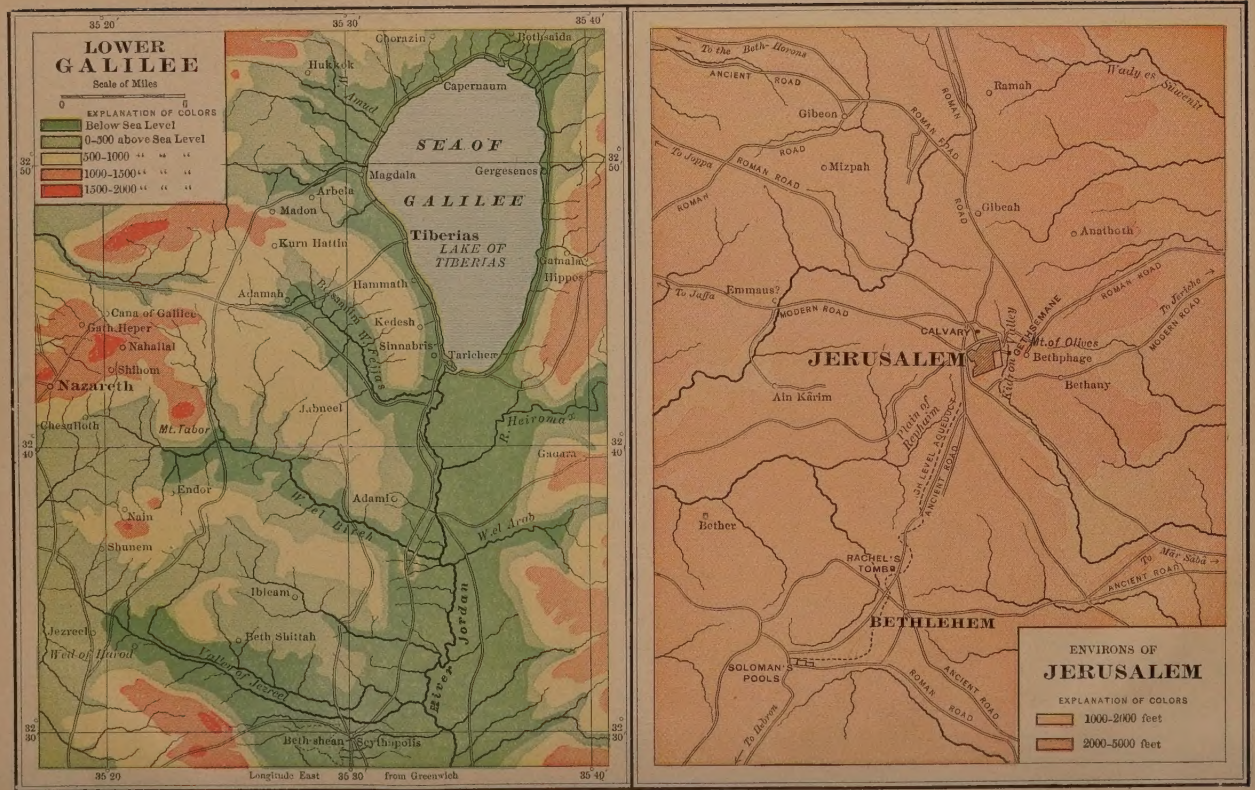
PELOUBET'S SELECT NOTES ON THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

1922

Ira S. Deter,
Goshen,
Ind.

Copyright 1914, by W.A. Wilde Company

Copyright 1910 by W. A. Wilde Co.



Copyright 1905. by W. A. Wilde Company

FOUNDED BY REV. FRANCIS N. PELOUBET, D.D.

SELECT NOTES

ON THE

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES: COURSE FOR

1922

Later Leaders and Prophets of Israel (Northern Kingdom)
(FIRST QUARTER OF A NINE-MONTHS COURSE) JANUARY—MARCH

Prophets and Kings in Judah (Southern Kingdom)
(SECOND QUARTER OF A NINE-MONTHS COURSE) APRIL—JUNE

The Exile and the Restoration
(THIRD QUARTER OF A NINE-MONTHS COURSE) JULY—SEPTEMBER

Jesus the World's Saviour: Studies in Luke
(FIRST HALF OF A SIX-MONTHS COURSE)

Four full-page half-tone pictures and over 125 illustrations in the text

BY

AMOS R. WELLS, LITT.D., LL.D.,

FOR TWENTY YEARS DR. PELOUBET'S ASSOCIATE
IN WRITING THIS BOOK

Forty-eighth Annual Volume

BOSTON, MASS., U. S. A.
PUBLISHED BY W. A. WILDE COMPANY,
WESTERN OFFICE: CHICAGO, ILL. BOSTON, MASS.: 120 BOYLSTON ST.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

MAP OF KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH. MAP OF ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN POWERS
MAP OF LOWER GALILEE AND ENVIRONS OF JERUSALEM.

FOUR FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION. CHRONOLOGY 4
THE IMPROVED UNIFORM LESSONS 7
BIBLIOGRAPHY 10

LIST OF LESSONS FOR THE YEAR

FIRST QUARTER.

Later Leaders and Prophets of Israel (Northern Kingdom). (FIRST QUARTER OF A NINE-MONTHS' COURSE.)

LESSON.		PAGE.
I.	Jan. 1. THE REVOLT OF JEROBOAM. 1 Kings 12 : 1—13 : 6	13
II.	Jan. 8. ELIJAH THE TISHBITE. 1 Kings 17 : 1-24	22
III.	Jan. 15. ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE OF BAAL WORSHIP. 1 Kings 18 : 1-46	30
IV.	Jan. 22. ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND RETURN 1 Kings 19 : 1-21	38
V.	Jan. 29. ELIJAH IN NABOTH'S VINEYARD. 1 Kings 21 : 1-29	45
VI.	Feb. 5. ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN. 2 Kings 2 : 1-18	52
VII.	Feb. 12. ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN. 2 Kings 4 : 8-37	59
VIII.	Feb. 19. ELISHA AND NAAMAN THE SYRIAN. 2 Kings 5 : 1-27	66
IX.	Feb. 26. ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS. 2 Kings 6 : 8-23	74
X.	Mar. 5. JEHOVAH'S MERCY TO A HEATHEN CITY. Jonah 3 : 1—4 : 11	80
XI.	Mar. 12. AMOS WARNS ISRAEL. (Temperance Lesson.) Amos 6 : 1-8	88
XII.	Mar. 19. THE DOWNFALL OF ISRAEL. 2 Kings 17 : 1-18	94
XIII.	Mar. 26. REVIEW	101

SECOND QUARTER.

Prophets and Kings in Judah (Southern Kingdom). (SECOND QUARTER OF A NINE-MONTHS COURSE.)

LESSON.		PAGE.
I.	Apr. 2. ASA RELIES ON GOD. 2 Chron. 14 : 1-12	104
II.	Apr. 9. THE LORD PRESERVES JOASH. 2 Kings 11 : 1-17	112
III.	Apr. 16. THE LOVE OF JOASH FOR GOD'S HOUSE. 2 Kings 11 : 21—12 : 16. OR EASTER LESSON: John 2 : 19-31	119
IV.	Apr. 23. UZZIAH'S PRIDE AND PUNISHMENT. (Temperance Applications.) 2 Chron. 26 : 1-21	126
V.	Apr. 30. ISAIAH'S SUMMONS AND RESPONSE. Isa. 6 : 1-13	134
VI.	May 7. ISAIAH'S IDEAL FOR A WORLD AT STRIFE. Isa. 2 : 2-4 ; 11 : 1-9	141
VII.	May 14. HEZEKIAH LEADS HIS PEOPLE BACK TO GOD. 2 Chron. 30 : 1-27	148
VIII.	May 21. HILKIAH'S GREAT DISCOVERY. 2 Chron. 34 : 14-33	155
IX.	May 28. JEREMIAH SPEAKS BOLDLY FOR GOD. Jer. 26	162
X.	June 4. JEHOIAKIM TRIES TO DESTROY GOD'S WORD. Jer. 36	169
XI.	June 11. JEREMIAH CAST INTO PRISON. Jer. 37 : 1—38 : 13	176
XII.	June 18. THE DOWNFALL OF JUDAH. 2 Kings 25 : 1-21	183
XIII.	June 25. REVIEW : JUDAH'S PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY	190

THIRD QUARTER

The Exile and the Restoration. (THIRD QUARTER OF A NINE-MONTHS COURSE.)

LESSON.		PAGE.
I.	July 2. EZEKIEL, THE WATCHMAN OF ISRAEL. Ezek. 2 : 1—3 : 27	192
II.	July 9 DANIEL INTERPRETING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM. Dan. 2	200
III.	July 16. THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL. (Temperance Applications.) Dan. 5 : 1-31	208
IV.	July 23. DANIEL AND THE LIONS. Dan. 6 : 1-28	215
V.	July 30. THE FIRST RETURN FROM EXILE. Jer. 29 : 10-14 ; Ezra 1 : 1-11	221
VI.	Aug. 6. THE TEMPLE REBUILT AND DEDICATED. Ezra 3 : 1—6 : 22	228
VII.	Aug. 13. ESTHER SAVES HER PEOPLE. Book of Esther	235
VIII.	Aug. 20. THE SECOND RETURN FROM EXILE. Ezra 7 : 1—8 : 36	243
IX.	Aug. 27. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER. Neh. 1 : 1-11	250
X.	Sept. 3. NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM. Neh. 3 : 1—7 : 4	257
XI.	Sept. 10. TEACHING THE LAW OF GOD. Neh. 8 : 1-18	264
XII.	Sept. 17. THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI. Mal. 3 : 1—4 : 3	272
XIII.	Sept. 24. REVIEW : THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION	279

FOURTH QUARTER.

Jesus the World's Saviour : Studies in Luke (FIRST HALF OF A SIX-MONTHS COURSE.

LESSON.		PAGE.
I.	Oct. 1. THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Luke 1	281
II.	Oct. 8. THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS. Luke 2	288
III.	Oct. 15. THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Luke 3	296
IV.	Oct. 22. JESUS TEMPTED. Luke 4 : 1-30	303
V.	Oct. 29. WORLD-WIDE PROHIBITION—WORLD'S TEMPERANCE SUNDAY. Isa. 61 : 1-9	310
VI.	Nov. 5. JESUS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN. Luke 4 : 31—5 : 39	315
VII.	Nov. 12. JESUS THE GREAT TEACHER. Luke 6 : 1-49	323
VIII.	Nov. 19. JESUS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS. Luke 7	330
IX.	Nov. 26. JESUS THE GREAT MISSIONARY. Luke 8	336
X.	Dec. 3. JESUS SENDING OUT MISSIONARIES. Luke 9 : 1—10 : 24	344
XI.	Dec. 10. STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN. Luke 10 : 25-37	351
XII.	Dec. 17. JESUS AMONG FRIENDS AND FOES. Luke 10 : 38—11 : 54	357
XIII.	Dec. 24. A LESSON IN TRUST AND PREPAREDNESS. Luke 12. OR, THE BIRTH OF JESUS. (Christmas Lesson.) Luke 2 : 1-20	363
XIV.	Dec. 31. REVIEW	372

COPYRIGHTED, 1921, BY AMOS R. WELLS, AUBURNDALE, MASS.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL, LONDON. PUBLISHED NOV. 1, 1921. MADE IN U. S. A.

WILDE'S BIBLE PICTURE SET.

Illustrating the International Improved Uniform Sunday School Lessons for 1922.

Sixty pictures enclosed in portfolio, 90 cents postpaid.

First Quarter.

Lesson 1.

489 Jeroboam's Calf Worship Rebuked.
655 Rehoboam forsakes the council of the old men.

Lesson 2.

492 Elijah fed by the ravens. Washington Allston.

Lesson 3.

493 Elijah's sacrifice. Artist Unknown.
494 Slaughter of the Prophets of Baal. Doré

Lesson 4.

496 Elijah fed by an angel. Doré.

Lesson 5.

661 Elijah denouncing the crime of Ahab in Naboth's vineyard.

Lesson 6.

497 Elijah taken up into heaven. Doré.

Lesson 7.

498 Elisha raises the Shunammite's son. Julius von Schnorr.

Lesson 8.

664 Naaman. Artist unknown.

Lesson 9.

665 Elisha's heavenly defenders.

Lesson 10.

667 Jonah calling Nineveh to repentance.

Lesson 11.

756 Amos. (From Sargent's Prophets.)

Lesson 12.

522 Weeping over the ruined city.

Lesson 13.

Review.

Second Quarter.

Lesson 1.

657 Asa destroying Queen Maachah's idols. Artist unknown.

Lesson 2.

499 Infant Joash proclaimed king. Artist unknown.

Lesson 3.

666 Joash repairs the Temple.
161 Risen Lord and Mary Magdalen. Plockhorst.

Lesson 4.

668 Uzziah struck with leprosy.

Lesson 5.

777 Isaiah (from Sargent's Prophets.)

Lesson 6.

797 Peace Statue, "Christ of the Andes."

Lesson 7.

500 Hezekiah destroying the idols.

Lesson 8.

515 Josiah and the Book of the Law. Julius von Schnorr

Lesson 9.

674 Jeremiah (from Sargent's Prophets.)

Lesson 10.

514 Jeremiah's roll destroyed.

Lesson 11.

518 Jeremiah imprisoned. Artist unknown.

Lesson 12.

520 Jerusalem destroyed and the Jews deported.

Lesson 13.

Reveiw.

Third Quarter.

Lesson 1.

678 Ezekiel prophesying. Doré.

Lesson 2.

676 Daniel and his companions before Nebuchadnezzar.

Lesson 3.

524 Balshazzar's feast. J. Martin.
620 The vision of Belshazzar. Benjamin West.

Lesson 4

525 Daniel in the lions' den. Briton Riviere.
526 Daniel's answer to the king. Briton Riviere.

Lesson 5.

779 Cyrus restoring the vessels in the Temple. Doré.

Lesson 6.

193 Mosque of Omar on the site of the Temple. Jerusalem.

Lesson 7.

530 Esther before Ahasuerus. Veronese.

Lesson 8.

680 "The river that runneth to Ahava."
246 A troop of camels and driver.

Lesson 9.

782 Nehemiah praying.

Lesson 10.

681 Nehemiah and Sanballat's servant.

Lesson 11.

682 Ezra reading the Law.

Lesson 12.

504 Micah, Haggai, Malachi, Zechariah. Sargent.

Lesson 13.

Review.

Fourth Quarter.

Lesson 1.

759 An angel appearing to Zacharias.

Lesson 2.

19 Presentation in the Temple. Fra Bartolommeo.
31 Infancy of Christ. Hofmann.

Lesson 3.

39 In the Temple. Hofmann.
692 John the Baptist preaching. Doré.

Lesson 4.

547 Christ tempted by Satan. Cornicellius.

Lesson 5.

70 Healing the sick. Hofmann.
271 Temperance.

Lesson 6.

686 Jesus heals the man with the palsy. Bida.

Lesson 7.

64 Sermon on the Mount Hofmann.

Lesson 8.

75 Anointing the feet of Jesus. Hofmann.

Lesson 9.

79 Jairus's daughter cured. Hofmann.

Lesson 10.

83 Feeding the five thousand. Murillo.
98 "Peace be to this house." Dobson.

Lesson 11.

466 The Good Samaritan. Plockhorst.

Lesson 12.

114 Christ in the home of Mary and Martha. Hofmann

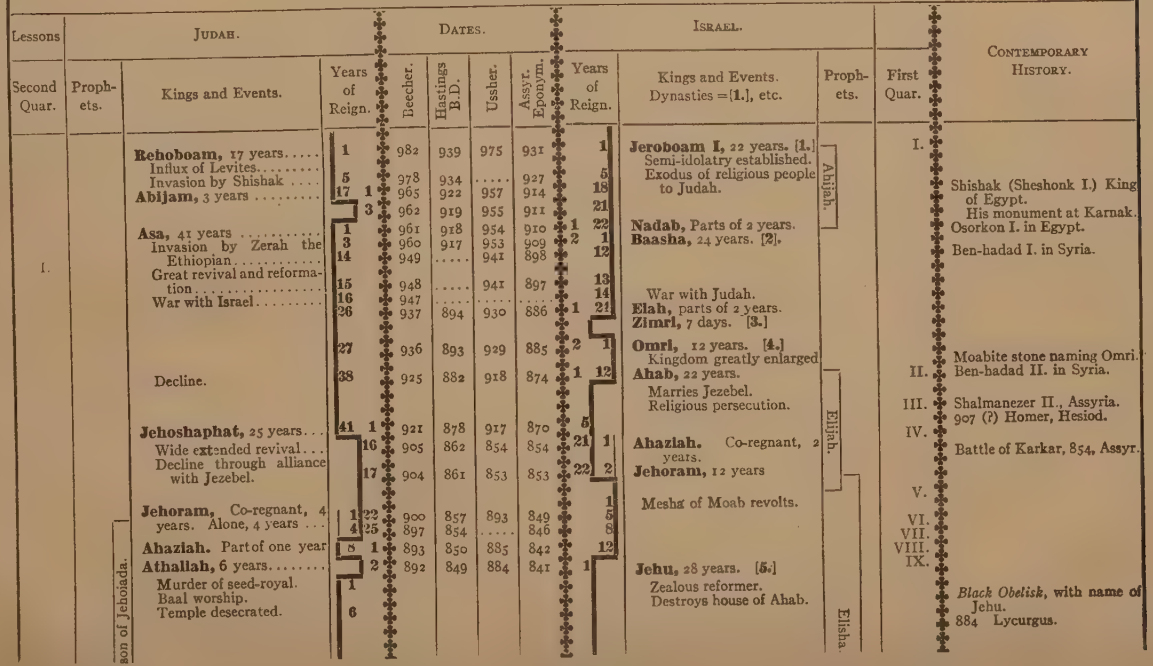
Lesson 13.

723 Parable of the rich man who built new barns.
14 Angels and the shepherds. Plockhorst.

Lesson 14.

Review.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL.



II.															878 (?) } Carthage founded.
III.															858 (?) }
															Shesbonk III. Egypt.
															820 (?) Lycurgus, Sparta.
															814 Macedonia founded.
															Ben-hadad III. in Syria.
															814 (?) Carthage founded.
															797 Damascus taken by Assyrians.
														X.	Blank in Assyrian history.
															Confusion in Egyptian.
															First Olympiad, 776 B. C.
														XI.	
IV.	Zechariah.		1	856	843	878	835		7	Jehu. Tributary to Assyria.					
			23	864	821	856	813		28	1	Jehoahaz, 17 years.				
			37	850	807	842	799		1	15	*Jehoash.* Co-regnant, 3 years				
			40	847	....	....	....		....	17	Hazael's expedition.				
			1	846	803	840	795		1	....	Jehoash, sole ruler 16 years.				
			14	833	....	....	....		....	15	Death of Elisha.				
											Victories over Damascus.				
			15	832	804	825	783		16		Conquest of Judah.				
			29	818	....	....	767		....	1	**Jeroboam II.,** 41 years.				
			1	....	....	....	....		....	15	Suzerain of all peoples from				
										27	Mediterranean to Euphrates.				
	Amos.		1	806	801	811	....		41				Jonah.		
			15	792	....	....	741		....	1	Death of Jeroboam.		Hosea.		
			16										Amos.		
			38	791	763	773	....		....		INTERREGNUM, 22 years.				The Jewish Cyclopedia gives 2 reigns of Jeroboam II, 825–799 and 788–773; Israel being under Syria 799 to 788.
			39	769	763	772	741		....	22	**Zechariah,** 6 months.				
			40	767	762	772	741		....		**Shallum,** 1 month. [6.]				
			1							1	**Menahem,** 10 years. [7.]				
			44	763	763	....	738		....	5					Rome founded 753.
			49	758	752	761	737		....	10	**Pekahiah,** 2 years.				Draco.
										1					Expedition of Pul or Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, captures Damascus and Samaria, 733 (?)
V.			52	755	750	759	736		....	2	**Pekah,** 20 years. [8.]				
			23							2					The Jewish Cyclopedia gives 2 reigns for Pekah, 759–744, and 735–730. Time between Israel under Menahem II, under Assyria. *Taylor Cylinder.*
			1	754	749	742	....		....	16					
			15	740	....	....	....		....	17	Invasion of Judah.				
			16	739	....	....	735		....	18					
	Micah.	Isaiah.	1	738	741	742	....		....		Deportation by Tiglath-pileser				
											Death of Pekah.				
			3	736	....	....	734		....	20					Year in Rome begun with January, 713.
			13	726	730	734	....		1		*Hoshea,* governor.				
			16	723	727	726	....		4		**Hoshea,** king 9 years. [9.]				
VII.															Sargon I, Assyria, 722.
			1	722	....	....	....		....	5					Sennacherib, Assyria, 705.
			2	720	....	....	....		....						
			4							7	First siege and capture of Samaria.				
			6	718	722	....	722		....	9	[Final FALL OF SAMARIA.			XII.	
					721		721				End of Kingdom of Israel.				

Joash, 40 years. Temple and its worship restored.

Amaziah, Defeat of Edom. Conquest by Jehoash of Israel.

Nominal ruler under suzerainty of Israel. Death of Amaziah. Interregnum for 11 years.

Uzziah, 52 years. Also called Azariah.

Succeeds Jeroboam as suzerain of region.

Leprosy of Uzziah (?). *Jotham* regent 23 years.

Eclipse of sun by which Assyrian dates are determined. June 15, 763 B. C.

Jotham, sole king 16 years. Invasion by Israel and Rezin of Damascus.

Ahaz, 16 years.

Tributary to Assyria.

Hezekiah, 29 years. Great Passover.

Second Quar.	Prophets.	Judah, Sole Kingdom. Kings and Events.	Reigns	Beecher	Hastings	Usher.	Contemporary History.
VI.		**Hezekiah** ruling.					
	Isaiah.	**Manasseh,** 55 years.....		694	.....	697	
		Persecuting the prophets.					Esarhaddon, Assyria, 680. First Mikado, Japan, 660. Byzantium founded, 659. Medes independent, 640.
	Nahum.	Manasseh carried to Babylon.....		648	.....	.....	
		Return and reformation...		647	.....	.....	
	Zephaniah.	**Amon,** 2 years		639	.....	642	
		Josiah, 31 years		638	.....	640	
		Great reformation.....		627	.....	.....	
VIII.		Book of the Law found...		622	.....	.....	Scythian invasion, 626. Nabopolasser, 625. Draco's legislation, Athens, 624.
		Invasion of Necho.....		608	.....	.....	
		Jehoahaz, 3 months.....		608	.....	609	Buddha, India, 623–543.
IX.		**Jehoiakim,** 11 years.....		607	.....	609	His public beginning, 594
X.	Habakkuk.	First captivity (Daniel, etc.		605	.....	.....	
		Nebuchadnezzar's dream		603	.....	....	Destruction of Nineveh, 606.
II. (3d)		Second deportation.....		598	....	....	Nebuchadnezzar king, 604. Battle of Carchemish.
		Jehoiachin, 3 months		597	....	598	Phœnicians circumnavigate Africa, 604.
		Ezekiel deported?					Solon legislation, Athens, 594.
I. (4d)	Jeremiah.	**Zedekiah,** 11 years.....		597	....	598	
XI.		Ezekiel begins to prophesy.		593	.....	.....	Pythian games begin, 588.
		Siege of Jerusalem.....		588	....	588	Nebuchadnezzar besieges Tyre, 585.
XII.	Ezekiel.	Temple destroyed.. ...		586	..	586	Evil Merodach, Babylon, 562. Confucius, China, 559. Temple of Diana, Ephesus, 552.
Third Quar		Jehoiachin released.....		561	.....	.....	Public Library, Athens, 544.
III.		Belshazzar's feast.....		539	.....	538	Cyrus takes Babylon, 539.
IV.		Daniel in the lions' den....		538	.....	538	Cyrus Cylinder.
V.	Daniel.	First return under Zerubbabel.....		538	538–7	536	
		Foundations of temple laid		537–6	536	.....	Darius of Persia, 521. Roman Republic, 510.
		A long delay.					Marathon, 490. Xerxes (Ahasuerus), 489.
VI.	Zechariah. Haggai.	Building resumed.....		520	520	.....	Thermopylae and Salamis, 480.
		Second temple completed..		516	516	516	
		Esther becomes queen in Babylon.....		479	.....	.....	
VII.		Haman's plot against the Jews.....		474	.....	.....	
VIII.		Second return under Ezra.		458	458	458	Artaxerxes king, 465.
IX.		Nehemiah's prayer in Babylon.		444	.....	445	First decemvirate, Rome, 451.
X.		Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem.		444	.....	444	Pericles, Athens, 444.
XI.		Ezra and Nehemiah teach the Law.		444	.....	.....	Parthenon, Athens, 443. First Peloponnesian War, 431.
XII.	Malachi.	Malachi prophesies during Nehemiah's second administration.		428	.....	.....	Alexander the Great, 332.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

LESSONS	NO.	EVENTS	DATE	MATT.	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
	1.	Annunciation to Mary	March, B.C. 5	. . . .	. . . .	1 : 26–38	. . . .
I.	2.	Birth of John the Baptist	June "	. . . .	. . . .	1 : 57–80	. . . .
II.	3.	Birth of Jesus	Dec. "	1 : 18–25	. . . .	2 : 1–20	. . . .
	4.	Visit of the wise men	Jan. B. C. 4	2 : 1–12	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .
	5.	Flight into Egypt	Feb. "	2 : 13–23	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .
	6.	Youth at Nazareth	B. C. 2–26	2 : 23	. . . .	2 : 39–52	. . . .
III.	7.	Ministry of John the Baptist	A. D. 26–28	3 : 1–12	1 : 1–8	3 : 1–18	. . . .
	8.	Baptism of Jesus	Jan. A D. 27	3 : 13–17	1 : 9–11	3 : 21–23	. . . .
IV.	9.	Temptation of Jesus	Jan.-Feb. 27	4 : 1–11	1 : 12, 13	4 : 1–13	. . . .
		First Year of Ministry.	**A.D. 27**				
	10.	First disciples	Feb.	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	1 : 15–51
	11.	First miracle. Wedding at Cana	"	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	2 : 1–12
	12.	First cleansing of the temple	Apr. 11–17	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	2 : 13–25
	13.	First recorded discourse (Nicodemus)	" "	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	3 : 1–21
		Second Year of Ministry.	**A.D. 28.**				
	14.	At the Pool of Bethesda	Mar.-Apr.	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	5 : 2–47
	15.	John the Baptist in prison	Mar.	14 : 3–5	6 : 17, 18	3 : 19, 20	. .
	16.	Jesus rejected at Nazareth	April	. . . .	. . . .	4 : 16–30	. .
VI:	17.	Paralytic healed	May, June	9 : 2–8	2 : 1–12	5 : 17–26	. .
	18.	Withered hand healed	" "	12 : 9–14	3 : 1–6	6 : 6–11	. .
	19.	Calling of the Twelve.	Midsummer	10 : 2–4	3 : 13–19	6 : 12–19	. .
VII.	20.	Sermon on the Mount	"	5, 6, 7	. . . .	6 : 20–49	. . . .
	21.	Centurion's servant healed	"	8 : 5–13	. . . .	7 . 1–10	. . . .
	22.	Raising of the widow's son	"	. . . .	. . . .	7 : 11–17	. . . .
	23.	John's messengers to Jesus	"	11 : 2–19	. . . .	7 : 18–35	. . . .
VIII.	24.	Parable of two debtors	"	. . . .	. . . .	7 : 36–50	. . . .
	25.	Stilling of the tempest	Autumn	8 : 18–27	4 : 35–41	8 : 22–25	. . . .
IX.	26.	Healing the demoniac	"	8 : 28–34	5 : 1–20	8 : 26–39	. . . .
	27.	Jairus's daughter raised to life	"	9 : 18–26	5 : 21–43	8 : 40–56	. . . .
		Third Year of Ministry	**A.D. 29**				
	28.	Second rejection at Nazareth	Winter	13 : 53–58	6 : 1–6	. . . .	. . . .
	29.	The Twelve sent forth.	"	9 : 35–11 : 1	6 : 6–13	9 : 1–6	. . . .
	30.	Death of John the Baptist	March	14 : 1–12	6 : 14–29	9 : 7–9	. . . .
	31.	Feeding of the five thousand	April	14 : 13–21	6 : 30–46	9 : 10–17	6 : 1–15
	32.	Jesus walks on the water	"	14 : 22–33	6 : 47–52	. . . .	6 : 16–21
	33.	Syrophœnician girl healed	Summer	15 : 21–28	7 : 24–30	. . . .	. . . .
	34.	Feeding of the four thousand	"	15 : 32–39	8 : 1–10	. . . .	. . . .
	35.	Peter's confession	"	16 : 13–20	8 : 27–30	9 : 18–21	. .
	36.	The transfiguration	"	17 : 1–13	9 : 2–13	9 : 28–36	. . . .
	37.	Healing the man born blind	Oct. 11–18	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	9 : 1–39
X.	38.	Mission of the Seventy	Nov.-Dec.	. . . .	. . . .	10 : 1–24	. . . .
XI	39.	Parable of the Good Samaritan	" "	. . . .	. . . .	10 : 25–37	. .
XII.	40.	Jesus with Mary and Martha	" "	. . . .	. . . .	10 : 38–42	. . . .
XIII	41.	Parable of the rich fool	" "	. . . .	. . . .	12 : 16–31	. . . .

THE IMPROVED UNIFORM LESSONS.

(THE GRADED-UNIFORM SERIES.)

As we send out this book, the Improved Uniform Lessons are still used by the large majority of American Sunday schools, in spite of the determined hostility to them in certain quarters. While this strong popular favor is shown to the Uniform Lessons, they will undoubtedly continue to be issued.

The Improved Uniform Lessons are correctly named, for they embody a number of acknowledged and important improvements over the uniform lessons of the old type.

They are graded lessons, and should be counted as graded lessons by all official standards. While uniformity of subject and of text is generally preserved, with its vast advantages in practical operation, the Improved Uniform Lessons are thoroughly adapted to all the grades. This is accomplished by the use of a large portion of Scripture, commonly an entire chapter for the older classes, while the younger classes study only the part of the chapter that is adapted to their age and experience. In the rare cases, only three or four times a year at most, when the chapter does not furnish matter suited to the younger grades, other selections are made, in harmony with the general subject, that are perfectly fitted to the younger pupils. To each department of the school is assigned a topic which brings out the aspect of the general subject that is of special interest and im-

portance to the age of that department. These Notes present week by week the outlines of the lessons as offered by the Lesson Committee. Any Sunday-school worker can study these outlines and convince himself that, while the principle of uniformity is maintained, the principle of gradation is also adhered to and everywhere exemplified.

The school that does not use the Improved Uniform Lessons is missing essential advantages and without compensating gains. Where the non-uniform graded lessons are used throughout the school, seventeen different lessons up to the Young People's grade will be in use every Sunday, and an indefinite number beyond that grade. There is no such thing as focusing the interest and attention of such a school on a single theme. The school is divided among some twenty different themes and twenty different Bible passages.

The problem of substitute teachers in such schools is insoluble. If a teacher is absent, the distracted superintendent finds it exceedingly difficult to procure a teacher who is ready to jump into a lesson entirely different from the one that he has studied. Nor can the class thus left without a teacher be joined for the day with another class, for probably no other class is studying a lesson remotely like the lesson which the class without a teacher has prepared. This difficulty alone is constantly bringing schools back from the non-uniform graded into the uniform graded ranks.

The non-uniform graded school cannot hold a teachers' meeting to study the weekly lesson, since it has twenty or more weekly lessons. It may hold an occasional teachers' meeting to discuss methods or to study the Bible in general, but the old-fashioned teachers' meeting, which throws a flood of light upon the definite lesson of the coming Sunday and gives the teachers inspiring and fruitful plans for their presentation of that lesson, is a possibility only in the uniform-graded school. Such a teachers' meeting is the heart of sound Sunday-school progress, and has been so regarded by the wisest Sunday-school leaders for decades. In schools using the uniform-graded lessons each teacher is upheld and stimulated by the other teachers, and a constant interchange of plans and experiences is carried on. In the non-uniform graded schools each teacher is isolated, and must develop his plans and carry on his work all by himself.

The same harmful results are shown in the home. Under the non-uniform graded system family study of the Sunday-school lesson is impossible. I once received a despairing letter from a father in whose family, under the non-uniform graded plan, seven different Sunday-school lessons were to be studied every week. Under such conditions parental guidance and inspiration of the children's Bible study, which is vitally important, is practically out of the question. Under the uniform-graded system the family is a unit in its Bible study, and Christian parents lead their children along the paths which they themselves are pursuing.

Though the non-uniform graded lessons, after all these years of strenuous advocacy, are yet used in only a minority of American Sunday schools, the confusion which they have introduced has had wide results. For one thing, the large class of commercial travellers, and others whose duties carry them constantly from place to place, are discouraged from attending the Sunday schools and studying any Sunday-school lesson, not being at all sure that they will find the lesson taught which they have been studying. For another thing, whereas formerly every religious paper and a large number of secular weeklies and dailies carried helps on the uniform Sunday-school lesson, now these helps have virtually disappeared from the secular periodicals and from many of the most important religious papers as well. If the non-uniform graded lessons should be adopted by a majority of schools this treatment of the Sunday-school lessons in the periodical press would be wholly abandoned of necessity, and with it would go one of the best aids to Bible study and positively the widest recognition and advertisement of the Sunday school. No one who has studied the immense influence of the press in our American life will fail to recognize the importance of this consideration.

In fact, the adoption by the majority of schools of the non-uniform graded lessons would shut off the tremendous gains that come from the publication of many books, magazines, and papers all bearing on the chosen themes and Bible passages, as well as the frequent treatment of those subjects and passages in church prayer meetings and in the pastors' sermons. The non-uniform graded system shuts the teacher up to the use of a single lesson help, stereotyped and unchanged for a decade or more, one and the same year after year, not issued freshly year by year and month by month, brought thoroughly up to the times. This is an economy, but a disastrous one. From it, if it should win the day, the cause of real Bible study would suffer losses that can hardly be reckoned.

The non-uniform graded system is based on a false analogy, that of the public school and college. In these secular schools the subjects taught and the text-books vary decis-

ively year by year, as the pupils grow in mental ability and develop new interests. No one would think of teaching calculus to a child of six or primary arithmetic to a young man of twenty.

But the Sunday school has only one study and aim, the building up of a religious character. It has only one text-book, the Bible. Science, biography, history, philosophy, all are introduced in connection with this study, but only as illustrations, as Christ used them. It is impossible in a public school or college to center the attention of all classes on the same theme, but in the Sunday school it is not only possible but eminently desirable.

Children and adults study in the Sunday school the love of God. Why should the child of six study it in January, the child of ten study it in April, the youth of seventeen study it in December, and the fathers and mothers study it in June? Why should they not all have the inspiration and help that come from the consideration of the great theme together? The children will use some simple Bible statement of the love of God, the adults may begin with the same statement but go on to the most profound discussion of the theme in the writings of Paul and John, but all the school will be bound together by the one great interest. The same considerations hold regarding every Bible topic: it has its meaning for the young and old alike; it finds expression in Bible passages within the range of the young which serve as starting-points for the widest outreaches of the mature. Chopping the school up into twenty sections which study the same themes at twenty different times is unscientific, unpedagogic, and enormously wasteful of spiritual values.

The uniform-graded system is both topical and chronological. Its occasional quarters or half-years of study of spiritual and moral themes range over the entire Bible and acquaint the pupil with the book as a whole. Its more usual studies take the Bible book after book in the regular process of history, and give the pupil a knowledge of its events, persons, and writings which in fulness and orderliness are unapproached by the non-uniform graded lessons. After eight years in the Improved Uniform Lessons, with equally capable teachers, a pupil will know far more about the Bible and will be grounded in a far wider scope of religious principles than a pupil who has pursued the non-uniform series. A comparison and classification of the material of the two series will amply bear out this statement.

The Improved Uniform Lessons for 1922 illustrate the many advantages of the uniform-graded plan. They are perfectly adapted to every grade of the school. They study the great Bible themes, and in such proportions as the Bible itself furnishes. They familiarize the pupil with the great Bible events and persons in their historical order. They assign short and easy passages to the little ones and encourage the adults to read and study large sweeps of Holy Writ. They have every right to be counted scientifically graded lessons, yet retain all of the immense advantages of uniformity. We would not force them on any school if we could, but we believe that the entire Sunday-school world will come to them in time.

ONE TREATMENT FOR ALL GRADES.

The limits of space in this book preclude a separate treatment of the lesson for each grade or even each department of the school. If this separate treatment should be given, it would be at the expense of the thorough grounding in the lesson facts which is necessary for teachers of all grades. Suggestions for teachers of the separate grades and departments are given with each lesson, and then a full discussion of the Scripture passage, with a wealth of illustrations and suggestive thoughts from which each teacher will select what will be most helpful to his class. This material is not classified,— quotations, illustrations, Oriental customs, language notes, and the like,— because the teacher does not use it in that way; but all the material is given in the natural teaching order, just as a good teacher would take it up in developing a lesson.

THE AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION.

The Bible text used in this volume, by special arrangement with the publishers, Thomas Nelson and Sons, is the revision of the King James Bible made by the American Committee of Revision in co-operation with the British Committee, and includes the changes decided upon by the American revisers. It is the translation regarded by American scholars as the nearest approach to the original Hebrew and Greek, presenting with the greatest accuracy yet attained the thoughts of Holy Writ.

This version is here used because it has been adopted by the Sunday-school boards of the various denominations for their helps, and is the only version used by the International Sunday School Lesson Committee. The use of it clears up uncounted passages without notes, and greatly facilitates the study of the Word of God.

SURPLUS MATERIAL.

The Surplus Material Department of the World's Sunday School Association is conducted by Rev. Samuel D. Price, D.D., whose address is 216 Metropolitan Tower, New York. For a long time he has been furnishing to Sunday-school workers the addresses of missionaries in this country and abroad who will make good use of the surplus and used material which so many Sunday schools and Sunday-school workers accumulate. Your copy of Peloubet's Notes will be of immense value, after you are through with it, to some lonely missionary who lacks the advantages of libraries. Pictures of Bible scenes and events are eagerly accepted and used in many ways. So are scrapbooks, quarterlies, papers, books, special exercises for Christmas and Easter. In writing to Dr. Price at the above address be sure to name your denomination and inclose a stamp for reply. *Do not send him your supplies*, but merely obtain from him the address of a missionary with a letter of introduction; then send the material direct to the missionary yourself.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSONS.

The lessons of this year have so wide a range that only the general books can be noted here, and only a few of the best of those, leaving the student to find the books of narrower scope mentioned under the library references of the separate lessons.

BIBLE DICTIONARIES: *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Howard-Severance Co.), five volumes; Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible* (Scribner's), five volumes; *Encyclopædia Biblica* (Macmillan), four volumes; in one volume, dictionaries by Smith-Peloubet (Winston), Davis (Westminster), Jacobus (Funk and Wagnalls), Hastings (Scribner's), Ewing and Thomson (Dutton), Piercy (Dutton), etc.

COMMENTARIES ON THE ENTIRE BIBLE (some in process of publication): *Cambridge Bible* (Putnam), *New Century Bible* (Oxford University Press), *Bible for Home and School* (Macmillan), *International Critical Commentary* (Scribner's), Ellicott's, *Expositor's Bible, Pulpit Commentary, Speaker's Commentary*, Parker's *People's Bible*, Butler's *Bible Work, Westminster Commentaries* (Gorham), *American Commentary* (American Baptist Publication Society), Miller's *Devotional Hours* (Doran), Maclaren's *Expositions* (Doran), Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible* (Scribner's), etc. In one volume: commentaries by Dummelow (Macmillan), Gray (Revell), Peake (Nelson), etc.

BIBLE BIOGRAPHIES: *Men of the Bible Series* (Revell). F. B. Meyer's Series (Revell), William M. Taylor's Series (Harper's), Whyte's *Bible Characters* (Revell), *Men of the Old Testament* (Jennings and Graham), Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible* (Doran), *Temple Bible Characters* (Lippincott). Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible* (Scribner's), Wharton's *Famous Men and Women of the Old Testament* (E. B. Treat), Gordon's *Prophets and Poets of the Old Testament* (Doran), Mackay's *The Woman of Tact* (Doran), Sangster's *Women of the Bible* (Christian Herald), Broughton's *Representative Women of the Bible* (Pepper), Horton's *Women of the Old Testament* (Herrick), Brown's *Nameless Women of the Bible* (American Tract Society), etc.

BIBLE HISTORIES: Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*, McCurdy's *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments* (Macmillan), Edersheim's *History of Israel and Judah* (Revell), Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church* (Scribner's), Ottley's *Short History of the Hebrews* (Macmillan), Kent's *Student's Old Testament* (Scribner's), Rogers's *History of Babylonia and Assyria* (Eaton and Mains), Smith's *Old Testament History* (Scribner's), Wade's *Old Testament History* (Dutton), Grant's *The Orient in Bible Times* (Lippincott), Beecher's *Dated Events of the Old Testament* (Sunday School Times), etc.

BIBLE GEOGRAPHY: George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (Doran), Thomson's *The Land and the Book*, Geikie's *The Holy Land and the Bible*, Hilprecht's *Explorations in Bible Lands* (Holman), Calkin's *Historical Geography of Bible Lands* (Westminster), Barton's *Archæology and the Bible* (American Sunday School Union), Van-Lennep's *Bible Lands* (Harper), Ritter's *Comparative Geography of Palestine*, Robinson's *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, Price's *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, Wilson's *In Scripture Lands* (Scribner's), Tristram's *Bible Places*, etc.

ART, LITERATURE, AND THE BIBLE: Hurll's *The Bible Beautiful* (Page), Stoddart's *Old Testament in Life and Literature* (Doran), Moulton's *Literary Study of the Bible*, Horder's *The Poets' Bible* (Ward, Lock and Bowden), Moffat's *Expositor's Dictionary of Poetical Quotations* (Doran), Sparrow's *The Old Testament in Art* (Doran), *Doré Bible Gallery*, etc.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE LESSONS IN LUKE.

LIVES OF CHRIST: Recently published: Paterson-Smyth's *A People's Life of Christ* (Revell), Lees's *The Life of Christ* (Dodd, Mead and Co.). Also, lives of Christ by Gibson (Revell), Hill (Revell), Martin (Appleton), Davis (Revell), Anderson (Macmillan), Barton (Pilgrim's Press), Dawson (Jacobs), Peters (Revell), Gilbert (Macmillan), Rhees (Scribner's), Scott (Dutton), Sanders (Bible Study Publishing Co.), E. S. Phelps (Houghton Mifflin Co.), Sangster (Revell), Beecher, Abbott (Harper), Andrews (Scribner's), Horton (Revell), Boardman (Appleton), Deems, Ellicott, Hanna, Holtzmann, Pressensé, Talmage. Still the standard lives of Christ are those by Farrar, Edersheim, Geikie, and Stalker.

LESS COMPLETE BOOKS ON CHRIST'S LIFE: Wilson's *The Christ We Forget* (Revell). Brown's *The Master's Way* (Pilgrim Press), McFarland's *Etchings of the Master* (Eaton and Mains), Robertson's *Epochs in the Life of Christ* (Scribner's), Morgan's *The Crises of the Christ* (Revell), Glover's *The Jesus of History* and *Jesus in the Experience of Men* (Association Press), Garvie's *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus* (Doran). Smith's *The Days of His Flesh* (Doran), Watson's *The Life of the Master* (McClure, Phillips and Co.), Gunsaulus's *The Man of Galilee*, Whyte's *The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ* (Revell).

ON LUKE'S GOSPEL: General Bible commentaries already named; also commentaries by Weiss (Funk and Wagnalls), Peloubet (*Teacher's Commentary on Matthew*, Oxford University Press), Abbott (Barnes), Rice (American Sunday School Union), Hayes (*The Most Beautiful Book Ever Written*, Eaton and Mains).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES: Adeney's *Women of the New Testament* (Herrick). Farrar's *The Herods* (Herrick). Gillie's *Kinsfolk and Friends of Jesus* (A. and C. Black). McCook's *Women Friends of Jesus*. On the Apostles: by Jones (Doran), Greenhough (Doran), George (Revell), Hough's *The Men of the Gospels* (Eaton and Mains).

GREEK HELPS AND VERSIONS: *Expositor's Greek Testament* (Dodd, Mead and Co.), Alford's *Greek Testament* (Harper's), Vincent's *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Scribner's), Murdock's *Syriac New Testament*, Moffatt's *New Translation of the New Testament* (Doran), Smith's *The New Testament in Braid Scots*, *The Twentieth Century New Testament* (Revell).

ART STUDIES: Hurll's *The Life of Our Lord in Art* (Houghton Mifflin Company), Bailey's *The Gospel in Art* (Pilgrim Press), La Farge's *The Gospel Story in Art* (Macmillan), Farrar's *Christ in Art* (A. and C. Black), Eggleston's *Christ in Art* (the Bida illustrations), Sparrow's *The Gospels in Art*, French's *Christ in Art* (Page), Tissot's *Life of Jesus Christ* (Werner), *The Pictorial Life of Christ*, with illustrations by Mastroianni (Dodd, Mead and Co.)

MISCELLANEOUS: Hastings's great *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (Scribner's). Works on the miracles, by Taylor (Doran), Bruce (Doran), Spurgeon (Revell), Laidlaw (Funk and Wagnalls), Hovey, Lang (Pitman), Macdonald, Howson, Trench. Works on the parables, by Richey (Young and Co.), Arnot, Hubbard (Pilgrim Press), Bruce (Doran), Dods (Doran), Calderwood, Morgan (Revell), Lang (Pitman), Guthrie, Stretton, Trench. Crabtre's *Journeys of Jesus*. Snowden's *Scenes and Sayings* (Revell). Horr's *The Great Ministry* (Bible Study Publishing Company). Matheson's *Studies in the Portrait of Christ* (Doran). Evans's *Epochs in the Life of Christ* (Revell) Barton's *A Young Man's Jesus* (Pilgrim Press). Morgan's *Crises of the Christ* (Revell). Selbie's *Aspects of Christ* (Doran). Sanday's *Life of Christ in Recent Research* (Oxford University Press). *Harmonies of the Gospels*, by Stevens and Burton and by Kerr.

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY.

The ancients were far less exact in reckoning time than we are, and reckoned it at different times in different ways. Bible chronology shares the uncertainties of all chronologies of equal antiquity, but is probably more accurate than has come down to us from any contemporary people.

The Jews had two years, a sacred year beginning in March and a secular year beginning in September, the latter being now in use. Throughout the Bible, however, the March year is used almost always.

The Jews counted fractions of days as whole days and fractions of years as whole years. If a king died in the middle of a year, his reign was said to extend through the year and his successor's reign was sometimes said to begin the next year, and sometimes was made to

include the whole of the preceding year, that year being thus counted twice. It is obvious that this mode of reckoning would confuse the chronology.

A notable guide in fixing Bible chronology is an eclipse of the sun recorded in Assyria as happening in June of the tenth year of King Asshur-daan III. The astronomers know that this eclipse occurred in June of B. C. 763. We are told that Asshur-daan was contemporary with the latter part of the reign of King Uzziah of Judah, and this fact helps us to relate to our own chronology the reigns of all the Jewish kings.

Also, the Assyrians named each year from an annually elected officer called an eponym, much as if we elected a President every year and named the year after him. The list of these eponyms, called the Assyrian eponym canon, is complete for a long time, and we are also told in the Assyrian records of the relations between Assyrian kings and certain Jewish kings, such as Ahab and Jehu. These facts enable us to use the eponym canon to determine the lengths and dates of the Hebrew reigns. The Assyrian records, however, are fifty-one years shorter than the Hebrew in the period from the middle of the reign of Amaziah to the latter part of the reign of Uzziah, and it seems likely that the Assyrian historians omitted the record here as containing facts discreditable to the reigning monarchs. The Bible chronology elsewhere has proved so accurate that at this point there is good reason for trusting it rather than the Assyrian.

Besides the Assyrian and Babylonian records we are helped in the Bible chronology by the records of Egypt, where time was kept by years of exactly 365 days, so that every four years the Egyptian year fell back a day, the Egyptian new year's day thus falling in the course of time in all of the four seasons, returning to its starting point in 1461 of the Egyptian years. Contacts of Hebrew and Egyptian history aid in the fixing of Bible dates, though the aid derived from Egypt is less than that thus far obtained from Assyria.

In these Notes I follow, for the sake of clearness and uniformity, the admirable volume of Professor Willis J. Beecher, D.D., entitled *The Dated Events of the Old Testament*. In the following table I give his dates for this year's lessons, and in parallel columns the dates derived from the Assyrian Eponym Canon and those of Hastings's *Bible Dictionary* and the old dates of Ussher still found in the margins of many Bibles.

Parchment Rolls, Ink Well and Reed Pen.

BROOK CHERITH.

Later Leaders and Prophets of Israel

(Northern Kingdom)

IMPROVED UNIFORM LESSONS FOR 1922.

FIRST QUARTER.

WILDE'S BIBLE PICTURE SET

ILLUSTRATING THE INTERNATIONAL IMPROVED
UNIFORM SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR 1922

Sixty pictures enclosed in portfolio, 90 cents, postpaid

THE GREATEST SUPPLEMENTARY AID TO THE STUDY
OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS PUBLISHED

The pictures are 6 x 8 inches in size and beautifully printed on heavy coated paper.

W. A. WILDE COMPANY, Boston, Mass.

Please send me your set of Bible Pictures for 1922, for which I enclose 90 cents.

*Name*_____

*Town or City*_____

*Street*_____ *State*_____

strip by a vertical line down the center, on the left of which will be written, as the lessons proceed, the events in the history of the Southern Kingdom, and on the right those relating to the Northern Kingdom. Divide the vertical line into decades, half an inch to a decade, and mark them, beginning with B.C. 982, the division of the kingdom, and ending with B.C. 391, the death of Nehemiah. A five-foot strip would give you an inch to a decade.

The Young People and the Adults will make this lesson an opportunity to study industrial unrest and its cure, since it was at bottom a labor trouble that led to the division of the kingdom. After reviewing the lesson events, apply the history to present-day industrial difficulties. Hear them stated by a workingman and an employer. Get some fair-minded student of the problem to state what is wrong with each side, and what solution he would propose. Then discuss the proposed solution, and other remedies which the class may bring forward.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The disruption of the kingdom took place, according to Prof. W. J. Beecher, B.C. 982 ; according to Hastings, B.C. 939 ; *Encyclopædia Biblica*, B.C. 930 ; *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, B.C. 933.

Place. — Shechem, the chief city of the northern tribes. Here Abraham raised his first altar to Jehovah. Jacob also reared an altar here, and Joseph came hither to seek his brothers. It was a city of refuge, and here Joshua made his farewell address.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Educational lessons from Rehoboam.
Patriotic lessons from Jeroboam.
When government becomes a tyranny.
Policy *versus* principle.
The evils of idolatry.
Results of the disruption of the kingdom.
Bearing of the lesson on the labor problems of to-day.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Two Kings Who Lost Their Opportunities.

I. THE BOOKS OF THE KINGS.
A summary of Israel's history.

II. REHOBOAM'S LOST OPPORTUNITY, 1 Kings 12 : 1–15.
Opposing counsel.
A foolish choice.
The punishment of pride.

III. JEROBOAM'S LOST OPPORTUNITY, 1 Kings 12 : 16—13 : 6.
The divided kingdom.
A war forbidden.
The relapse into idolatry.
Idolatry rebuked.
Jeroboam's evil influence.
Industrial unrest and its cure.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on 1 Kings by Skinner (*New Century Bible*), Barnes (*Cambridge Bible*), Farrar (*Expositor's Bible*), Ellicott, Parker (*People's Bible*), *Speaker's Bible, Pulpit Bible*, Peake, Gray, Dummelow, etc. Curtis on Chronicles in *International Critical Commentary*. J. R. Miller's *Devotional Hours with the Bible*. Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*. Whyte's *Bible Characters*. Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*. Edersheim's *History of Israel and Judah*. Rawlinson's *Kings of Israel and Judah*. Geikie's *Old Testament Characters* and *Landmarks of Old Testament History*. Chapters in Newbolt's *Words of Exhortation*, Burrell's *Wayfarers of the Bible*, Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*, Jackson's *First Things First*.

I. THE BOOKS OF THE KINGS. Our last studies in the Old Testament ended in September, 1920, when we completed a course in the "Early Leaders and Kings of Israel," closing with Solomon. We are now, in a nine-months course, to finish our survey of the Old Testament, and it will be well to start out with a brief review of Old Testament history to the end of Solomon's reign.

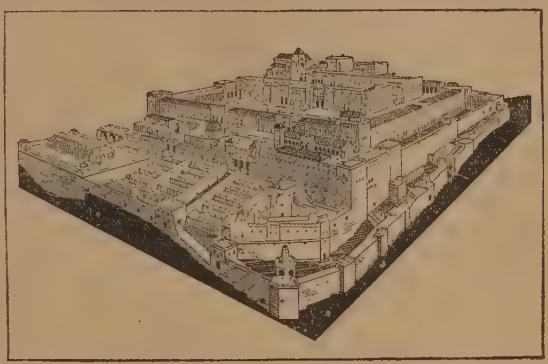
The Israelite nation was founded by that great hero of faith, Abraham, who went to Canaan about B.C. 1928 (the dates in the following are W. J. Beecher's). Isaac was born about B.C. 1903, and married Rebekah about B.C. 1864. The twins, Jacob and Esau, were born about B.C. 1844, and Jacob married Rachel and Leah about B.C. 1776. Joseph was born about B.C. 1752, and was sold into Egyptian slavery by his unnatural brothers about B.C. 1736. Then came the great famine, and Jacob with his clan went to Egypt about B.C. 1715.

The Israelites remained in Egypt, under conditions growing ever harder, until Moses led them out in the famous exodus, B.C. 1408, after more than two centuries in Egypt. Then followed forty years in the wilderness south of Canaan, marked by the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, the building of the tabernacle, and the consolidation of the Israelites under their great leader into a strong nation.

In B.C. 1450 both Aaron and Moses died. The following year, under Joshua, the Israelites entered Canaan, captured Jericho and Ai, and gradually took possession of the entire country, which was divided among the twelve tribes. After the death

of Joshua the people were ruled by judges, the first of whom was Othniel (about B.C. 1432). He was followed in order by Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Barak, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Samson, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Eli, and Samuel. These judges were engaged in a constant struggle with the unconquered tribes surrounding Canaan, — the Philistines, Midianites, Ammonites, etc.

The rule of judges lasted for more than three centuries. In B.C. 1102 a kingdom was established, Saul being selected and crowned by Samuel, the great judge, a national leader second only to Moses. Saul's headstrong, self-willed character offset his good qualities, and even during his life Samuel, in accordance with the divine direction, consecrated as his successor the noble young shepherd, David. Saul died in battle, with his generous and brave son Jonathan, and David, who had the hearts of the people, at once became king of Judah ; that was in B.C. 1063. After a few years of war with Saul's house, in B.C. 1055 David became king of all Israel. In a brilliant reign he defeated the hostile tribes, reduced them to subjection, greatly extended the bounds of the nation, captured Jerusalem and made it his capital, and also brought the ark thither and made Jerusalem the religious center of the kingdom.



From Schick's model.

Solomon's Temple.

This work was continued by his son Solomon, who ascended the throne in B.C. 1022. Solomon's reign was peaceful. He greatly extended the commerce of the land, he promoted agriculture, he wrote many proverbs and some psalms, he was learned in botany and zoölogy. His wisdom and magnificence attracted visitors from foreign lands, among them the Queen of Sheba from southern Arabia. Solomon erected the splendid temple in Jerusalem, one of the seven wonders of the world. He built a gorgeous palace for himself. All of this luxury meant heavy taxes and much oppression, and sowed the seeds of discontent among his people. He also sinned in practising polygamy, having at various times no fewer than one thousand wives and concubines. Many of these were idolaters, and so Solomon came to allow idol-worship. For all these sins it was foretold that the greater part of his kingdom should pass away from his house. After a reign of forty years Solomon died in B.C. 983, being succeeded by his son Rehoboam, about whom we study this week.

THE TWO BOOKS OF KINGS are really one work. Indeed, in Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible, called "the Vulgate," Samuel and Kings are grouped together as the four Books of Kings. The Books of Kings are made up (1) of brief summaries of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah taken from the state chronicles of those lands, (2) fuller accounts of events in the lives of the prophets taken from the Lives of the Prophets, and (3) comments or exhortations written by the compiler of the book.

The history was probably put together soon after B.C. 561, for the last event recorded in Second Kings, the advancement of Jehoiachin after his imprisonment in Babylon, occurred in B.C. 561. The writer of the Books of Kings is unknown. Some scholars think that he was one of the exiles, and composed his history in Assyria. The title of the books springs from their subject, which is the history of the reigns of the Kings of Judah and Israel, the historian following the story of one country for a while, then returning and relating the story of the other country, and so on alternating.

II. **REHOBOAM'S LOST OPPORTUNITY**, 1 Kings 12 : 1–15. *Rehoboam's name* means (very strangely) "He who enlarges the people."

His father was Solomon ; and in spite of what is said about the enormous number of Solomon's wives, Rehoboam is the only son of Solomon mentioned in the Bible.

His mother (1 Kings 14 : 31) was Naamah, an Ammonitess, for whom Solomon built on Olivet opposite the temple a sanctuary to Molech, the bloody and probably licentious deity of her tribe. Rehoboam was doubtless infected by his mother with a liking for these foul rites.

His education, in the midst of Solomon's voluptuous court, tended to anything but virtue and manliness. Solomon's proverbs are full of wise advice to foolish sons, and very likely he had his own son chiefly in mind.

His age when Solomon died and he became king was forty-one (though some scholars think this a copyist's error for twenty-one). He was old enough to have gained wisdom, but almost all the circumstances of his life had been unfavorable to him.

Instead of summoning the Israelites to Jerusalem for his coronation, Rehoboam may have called them to Shechem, for the reason that it was the chief city of the northern tribes, and Rehoboam wished to make sure of their support ; moreover, it was a more central place for a national gathering. On the other hand, the representatives of the ten northern tribes may have met independently in Shechem, and proudly bidden Rehoboam to come there, if he sought their allegiance. The city was situated between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, in what was later called Samaria, and the site is near the modern Nablus.

Shechem.

Jeroboam was present at this assembly. His name means " He shall increase the people." His father's name was Nebat, and he belonged to the leading northern tribe of Ephraim. He was " a mighty man of valor " (1 Kings 11 : 28), in contrast to the effeminate Rehoboam. Solomon had found him to be industrious, and of so great executive ability that when the king built the Millo portion of the wall of Jerusalem he made Jeroboam overseer of all the workmen from his tribe.

The hard labor which Solomon exacted from the people to build his great edifices and construct his vast public works aroused deep popular resentment and discontent. Jeroboam sympathized with the people, and organized an unsuccessful revolt. He was encouraged in this revolt by the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh, once the religious capital of the nation. This prophet met Jeroboam alone in a field. Ahijah had on a new garment which he removed and deliberately tore into twelve pieces, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he bade the young patriot take ten of the pieces, explaining that ten of the tribes were to be ruled by him, and only two were to remain to Solomon's son. When Jeroboam's revolt failed, he fled from Solomon's wrath to Egypt, and remained there till Solomon's death. Then the people sent for Jeroboam, that he might lead them in making terms with Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

At Shechem, then, delegates from all the tribes were present to choose a king. Jeroboam was the natural leader of the reform party, the people's party, and its spokesman. Addressing Rehoboam, he made formal request for a lightening of the royal exactions. He did not ask for the entire abolition of taxes and forced labor, but only that they might be lessened. Rehoboam did not make an immediate reply, but asked three days for consideration.

Then the young prince obtained advice from two sets of counsellors. First the old men that had advised Solomon, and had gained much practical wisdom from long experience and from contact with that sagacious monarch, counselled Rehoboam to answer the people gently and at least pretend to grant a portion of their requests. " If you do this," said the shrewd advisers, " they will be your servants forever." It was not palatable advice. It seemed to the proud Rehoboam like giving up all his

12. So Jĕr-ŏ-bō′-ăm and all the people came to Rē-hŏ-bō′ăm the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him,

14. And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

royal perogatives; for what king did not do with his subjects just what he pleased? And if he began to yield in a few points, where would it end? The people would never be satisfied. So it would seem to Rehoboam.

Then "Rehoboam turned to the younger men, the men of his own standing — bold spirits, who had none of the timidity of age, who might well seem to him more competent interpreters of the temper of their own day than persons who belonged to a generation that was just dying off. The young men were imbued with all the contempt for popular demands, and all the pride and insolence of a narrow and exclusive aristocracy." — *Rawlinson.* They advised Rehoboam to "stand pat," hold his ground, and answer the people stoutly. He was to declare that he would be a severer taskmaster than his father, and would heap on the people still heavier burdens. In that way he would put the people in their place, and show that he was not to be trifled with. It is easy to see why a young prince brought up as Rehoboam had been should have been pleased with this advice.

Rehoboam Forsakes the Counsel of the Old Men.

12. **So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day.** "The year since Solomon's death had no doubt been diligently used by Jeroboam in secret preparation for the crisis that had now arrived." — *Geikie.*

13. **And the king answered the people roughly.** Rehoboam knew that his father Solomon had been able to impose almost unending tasks upon the people, and they had submitted tamely. He did not realize that Solomon's prestige was vastly greater than his own, and that the people had been merely waiting for the old king to die that they might gain relief from their crushing burdens. Rehoboam was not the first man to discover that brag and bluster soon reach the limits of their influence. **And forsook the counsel of the old men.** "There was One whom Rehoboam seems to have missed altogether in seeking advice — he did not go to God for counsel. God never advises unwisely." — *J. R. Miller.*

14. **And spake to them after the counsel of the young men.** "The language of arrogant self-confidence, which mistakes obstinacy for vigor." — *Ellicott.* "Counsel is good; any man that thinks he does not need it is a fool or worse. But counsel in order to be good must come from a reliable source." — *Butler.* **Saying, My father made your yoke heavy.** The real cause of the division of the kingdom goes back to the days of Solomon. "The harsh and foolish refusal of Rehoboam to redress the grievances of the people only set the spark to the inflammable material which had long been accumulating." — *Edersheim.* **But I will add to your yoke.** "A French counsellor, being asked to lay down some general rules for government, took a piece of paper and wrote on the top of it 'Moderation,' in the middle of the leaf, 'Moderation,' and at the bottom, 'Moderation.'" — *George M. Adams.* This is the advice

15. So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah, that he might establish his word, which Jehovah spake by A-hī'-jăh the Shī'-lŏ-nīte to Jĕr-ŏ-bō'-ăm the son of Nē'-băt.

16. And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

Rehoboam should have followed. **My father chastised you with whips.** Such as were used upon ordinary slaves. "A whip or flail was among the insignia of an Egyptian king. It may be that the same was the case with Israelite kings." — *Cambridge Bible.* **But I will chastise you with scorpions.** "Whips armed with hooks, such as were probably used upon criminals or recalcitrants." — *Edersheim.* This was a proverbial expression. "The **name,** 'scorpion,' is said to have been given by the Romans to an implement of flagellation. It is described as a long bag of leather, stuffed with sand, and provided with spikes." — *New Century Bible.* Rehoboam seems to have omitted another boastful proverb which his young counsellors had advised him to use, "My little finger is thicker than my father's loins" (verse 10). His speech was certainly foolish enough without that.

Jasper Seal of King Jeroboam's Officer.

Found in 1903 in the ruins of Megiddo, 25 miles north of Shechem. The motto on it is: "Belonginging to Shema, servant of Jeroboam."

15. **So the king hearkened not unto the people.** Some rulers "keep their ear to the ground" so as to obey the people's desire, however foolish. Rehoboam, with equal folly, opposed the people's desire when it was a righteous one. **For it was a thing brought about of Jehovah.** Of course we are not to think that the Lord compelled Rehoboam to act foolishly and wickedly so that God's word might be fulfilled; but God knew that Rehoboam's character would work out in this way, and so disposed events as to harmonize literally with the prophecy. **That he might establish his word.** "The Old Testament considers all events as directly connected with God. Jehovah reigneth — this grand truth is the sheet-anchor of faith by which it rides out the storms of this world." — *Edersheim.* **Which Jehovah spake by Ahijah.** The reference is to the event described in 1 Kings 11 : 29–39. This prophecy was preceded by a similar prophecy made to Solomon himself (1 Kings 11 : 9–13) when he refused to abandon his idolatries.

REHOBOAM'S PRIDE. When the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* complained in his paper of the difficulty of obtaining a good servant, John Ruskin wrote him a very noble letter the gist of which was, "There is only one way to have good servants, and that is to be worthy of being well served." Kindness, generosity, frankness, and uprightness in Rehoboam would have met with answering devotion on the part of the people; but haughtiness, obstinacy, and oppression met with an equal pride and a blazing wrath from them. As we measure to others, they will measure to us (Matt. 7 : 2).

III. **JEROBOAM'S LOST OPPORTUNITY,** 1 Kings 12 : 16 — 13 : 6. Rehoboam lost his great opportunity through pride; Jeroboam lost his through worldly policy. "With professions of religion on his lips he pandered to the rude and sensuous instinct which makes materialism in religion so much more attractive to all weak minds than spirituality." — *F. W. Farrar.*

16. **And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them.** Rehoboam had made it entirely plain that he did not intend to work for the people's welfare but solely for his own glorification. **The people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David?** What interest have we any longer in the royal family descended from David? This indignant outcry echoes Sheba, the Benjamite, who led the last great rebellion against the house of David before this time (2 Sam. 20 : 1). **Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse.** David's tribe is not ours, his fortunes are not ours. "The work of two generations was undone in a moment!" — *Geikie.* **To your tents, O Israel.** This expression is a reminiscence of the time when the

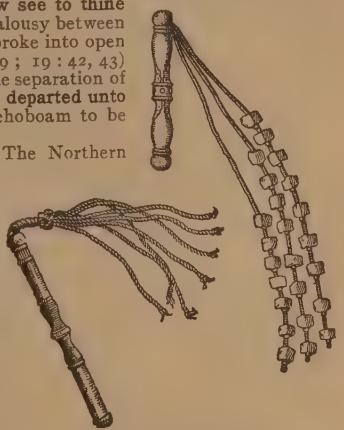
17. But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rē-hŏ-bō'-ăm reigned over them.

26. And Jĕr-ŏ-bō'-ăm said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David:

27. If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rē-hŏ-bō'-ăm king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rē-hŏ-bō'-ăm king of Judah.

Israelites led a nomadic life, living in tents. It calls on the people to disperse to their homes, and no longer countenance with their presence the gathering which had been called to crown Rehoboam. Some, however, think that the reference is to the tents of the temporary assembly at Shechem. **Now see to thine own house, David.** "A deep-seated tribal jealousy between Ephraim and Judah, which ever and again broke into open hostility (Judg. 8 : 1–3 ; 12 : 1–6 ; 2 Sam. 2 : 9 ; 19 : 42, 43) may be described as the secondary cause of the separation of the two kingdoms." —*Edersheim.* **So Israel departed unto their tents,** that is, their homes, leaving Rehoboam to be crowned by Judah alone.

17. **But as for the children of Israel.** The Northern Kingdom was so much larger and more populous than the Southern Kingdom that it received the proud name of Israel, and was in many quarters regarded as the Jewish nation. Judah had the southern half of Benjamin and the weak tribe of Simeon far below Hebron. **That dwelt in the cities of Judah.** "These would be chiefly men in the service of the royal house or men who had been received into special favor by David or Solomon, such as the descendants of Barzillai the Gileadite (2 Sam. 19 : 31–40)." —*Cambridge Bible.* **Rehoboam reigned over them,** though their natural affiliations would be with the northern tribes.



Roman Scourges.

The Roman scourge was sometimes armed with sharp bits of metal on small cords.

CIVIL WAR PREVENTED. Continuing his folly, Rehoboam sent to end the revolt of the northern tribes the most unpopular man he could have selected. This was Adoram, who had been Solomon's chief officer in charge of the forced labor to which the people so strenuously objected. "This is adding insult to injury," thought Jeroboam and his followers. In a frenzy of rage they seized missiles and stoned Adoram to death.

Rehoboam fled forthwith from Shechem to Jerusalem and immediately summoned 180,000 warriors from Judah and Benjamin, intending at once to make war on the rebels. Then rose a notable prophet, Shemaiah, who solemnly in the name of Jehovah forbade the civil war which Rehoboam was on the point of starting. "This thing is of God," declared Shemaiah.

Rehoboam submitted to the prophet, but proceeded to strengthen his kingdom against possible attack, not only from the Northern Kingdom, but still worse from Egypt, which had sheltered Jeroboam, and would probably be his ally against Judah. Therefore (2 Chron. 11 : 5) Rehoboam built numerous forts, especially toward the south, southwest, and west.

26. **And Jeroboam said in his heart.** He would be ashamed to utter his thought.

27. **If this people go up.** Jerusalem, being on a height, is always referred to as "up," though it may be south from the speaker. **To offer sacrifices,** as God had commanded through Moses, Deut. 12 : 11, 14 ; 16 : 6, 11. **In the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem.** Solomon's temple, though new, must have already become the supreme sanctuary of the land, far above such places as Mizpah, Ramah, and Gilgal, where Samuel had offered sacrifices. The size and splendor of the great building, the presence there of a throng of priests and Levites, and above all the manifestation of God himself in the Shekinah above the mercy-seat of the ark, constituted Solomon's temple

28. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30. And this thing became a sin; for the people went *to worship* before the one, even unto Dan.

the undoubted center of the religious life of the nation. **Then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam.** This event illustrates "God's disapproval, cut in deep letters, of the doctrine known as expediency." — *Canon Newbolt.* Jeroboam did not see how his people could be true to the temple at Jerusalem and at the same time true to him; but God would have shown him, if he had been patient and trustful. Sin is never anything but the worst policy. **And they will kill me.** The murder of Jeroboam would be the surest way of making their peace with Rehoboam. **And return to Rehoboam.** "Jeroboam began to fear lest, in their worship together, Judah and Israel should both so return to the Lord together, that the breach in the kingdom would be healed." — *Alexander Whyte, D.D.*

28. **Whereupon the king took counsel.** The event would not have been so serious if only the king had been concerned in it; but Jeroboam had the assent of his advisers and seemingly of all his people. **And made two calves of gold,** probably of wood overlaid with gold. The calf was the symbol of strength, the gold of splendor, purity, and worth. Jeroboam doubtless pointed to the example of Aaron, the first high priest, and the golden calf which he made. He had also before his mind, from his sojourn in Egypt, the worship of the sacred bull of Memphis and Heliopolis. This was "the most daring religious innovation ever attempted in Israel, and fraught with the most fatal consequences to Jeroboam and to Israel." — *Edersheim.* **And he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.** Thus he founded his new religion on a lie, for Jerusalem was almost as near to half his nation as Beth-el, and this was not at all the real reason for the establishment of idolatry. **Behold thy gods, O Israel.** Compare Aaron's words when he presented his golden calf to the people (Ex. 32 : 4). This does not mean of necessity that Jeroboam was teaching polytheism. Elohim, the common Hebrew word for God, is plural in form and is followed by a plural verb, but signifies only one God. This may be regarded as the plural of majesty, somewhat like "the editorial we." **Which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.** The calf-worship would arouse memories of Egyptian animal-worship, and the true God at the time of the exodus had so conclusively put to naught the idolatry of Egypt that Jeroboam was foolish indeed to recall those days on this occasion.

The Golden Calf.

29. **And he set the one in Beth-el.** A town in the extreme south of Jeroboam's realm, on the border of Benjamin. The name means "House of God." Bethel was already consecrated by God's two appearances to Jacob in that place, and by the religious gatherings which Samuel had held there. **And the other put he in Dan.** A place in the extreme north, originally named Laish. It was conquered by the tribe of Dan, as described in Judg. 18 : 7–10, 27–29. The rest of the Danites lived northwest of Judah. Dan also was a place with religious associations, but connected with idolatry.

30. **And this thing became a sin.** 1. It was the sin of idolatry, the worship of a crude and debasing symbol in place of God the Spirit, who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. 2. It was the sin of disobedience, because idolatry was expressly forbidden, and worship at the central sanctuary was expressly required. 3. It was the sin of schism, a division of the people of God, a weakening of the forces of true religion. 4. It was the sin of pride and personal ambition, because all this was done in self-will and to further Jeroboam's selfish aims. Jeroboam thought that he was pursuing a policy that was necessary for the perpetuity of his kingdom; but if the kingdom was built on the will of God, he could not have done better than obey God, humbly trusting him to maintain what he had established. **For the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.** Special mention is made of the Dan sanctuary rather than the Beth-el one because the former was in the opposite direction from Jerusalem, and as far from Jerusalem as possible. Thus the popularity of Jeroboam's idolatry was made evident.

Illustration. "There is an old story of an abbot who coveted a certain piece of ground. The owner refused to sell, but consented to lease it for one crop only. The shrewd abbot sowed acorns, a crop of which would take three hundred years to grow and ripen. Jeroboam's one sowing mortgaged the new kingdom for evil through all its two hundred and fifty years of history." — *J. R. Miller.*

JEROBOAM'S PUNISHMENT. Having established his main centers of idol-worship, Jeroboam increased his sin by building temples in the old "high places." Moreover, he celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, but on the fifteenth of the eighth month instead of the seventh month, as it should have been, thus disregarding the divine rule for the feast. He would have been glad to place the Levites in charge of his new religion, but they would have none of it, and began at once to migrate into the Southern Kingdom; therefore Jeroboam formed a new order of priests, taking any one of the common people who could bring the necessary offerings.

Bethel, looking toward Jerusalem.

Jeroboam was himself standing by his Beth-el altar burning incense, when a man of God who had come from Judah was bold enough to utter a prediction. He prophesied the birth of the reformer, King Josiah, and that he would burn on that altar the idolatrous priests, and that in confirmation of the prophecy the altar should be rent and the ashes poured out that very day. This actually happened, but first Jeroboam in his wrath stretched out his arm and commanded that the daring prophet should be seized. But the king's hand was withered and his arm stiffened, so that he could not draw it back again. It was not until Jeroboam had humbled himself, and begged the prophet to intercede for him with Jehovah, that the king's hand was restored as it was before.

JEROBOAM'S EVIL INFLUENCE. The Northern Kingdom had nineteen kings, and all were bad. Over and over the sacred historian says of them that they "followed in the steps of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

"When the statue of George Peabody was unveiled in London, the sculptor, Story, was invited to speak. Having no gift of eloquence, he pointed twice to the statue, saying, 'That is my speech!' A man who had lived an evil life said on his deathbed, 'I wish you could gather up my influence and bury it with me.'" — *David James Burrell, D.D.* For good or evil, men keep on speaking and influencing the world after they are dead.

"Jeroboam's calves remain in the world forever, until the Last Day; for whatever a man places his confidence and trust in, setting God aside, that is to him like Jeroboam's calves, which he worships and invokes instead of the only true, living, eternal God, who alone can and will give counsel and help in all need." — *Luther, "Table Talk."*

INDUSTRIAL UNREST AND ITS CURE. Jeroboam organized a strike on a nation-wide scale, just as the labor leaders of to-day attempt to do. It is nearly three thousand years since Jeroboam lived, and still we have not solved the labor problem. The world is immensely richer than in Jeroboam's day, science and mechanics have made it possible to do an enormous amount of work in a very short time, and yet the laborers are as unhappy as ever. They claim that labor-saving machinery should shorten their hours of toil far more than it has done; that the workers should receive a much larger share of the wealth they produce, and that they should themselves determine the conditions under which they work. They are seeking a workers' state, ruled by labor in all its parts, — Jeroboam to supplant Rehoboam.

The cure of all this unrest is the reform of both Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The employer must get rid of his pride and selfishness, and must become thoughtful of his employees, sympathic, self-sacrificing. Christianity alone can do this. Employer and employee must labor together, in a happy partnership to serve the world ; and Christianity alone can create such a brotherhood and partnership. Only the Carpenter of Nazareth, who is also the Good Physician, holds the cure of industrial unrest.

Grasp the Opportunity ! Few young men have ever had greater opportunities than Rehoboam and Jeroboam had, and none has ever missed his opportunity so shamefully.

" In our present career, a man has but one chance. Time does not fly in a circle, but forth, and right on. Character attains final permanence, and final permanence can come but once." — *Joseph Cook.*

" The highest characteristic of opportunity is definiteness. Opportunities, like Yale locks and keys, are each after a pattern. The Scripture does not say, ' Now is *a* day of salvation,' but ' Now is *the* day of salvation.' " — *Rev. E. W. Work, D.D.*

And yet, though it is sadly true that the opportunity of yesterday does not return, it is blessedly true that God is constantly, in this life, sending us new opportunities. Thus Walter Malone writes on " Opportunity ":

> "They do me wrong who say I come no more
> When once I knock and fail to find you in;
> For every day I stand outside your door
> And bid you wake, and rise to fight and win."

Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam might have " bought up the opportunity " (Eph. 5 : 16, margin), if they would.

LESSON II. — January 8.

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE. — 1 Kings 17 : 1–24.

PRINT vs. 1–16.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* — Matt. 6 : 33.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 62 : 1–8.
Reference Material : Ex. 16 ; 1 Kings 16 : 29–33 ; Matt. 6 : 19–34.
Primary Topic : God Cares for Elijah.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 17 : 1–16.
Memory Verse : He careth for you. 1 Pet. 5 : 7.
Junior Topic : Elijah, the Brave Prophet.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 17 : 1–16.
Memory Verse : Matt. 6 : 33.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : Jehovah's Champion Preserved.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Obeying the Word of Jehovah.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will consider chiefly God's care for Elijah as shown at the Cherith and at Zarephath, together with God's care for the hospitable widow and her son. Show on the sand map Samaria (or Jezreel ?), the Jordan, the Cherith ravine, the Mediterranean, and Zarephath. You may place questions on the Zarephath event in an open-mouthed jar, the pupils to insert their hands, draw out the slips one by one, and answer the questions. I once aroused much interest in the Cherith event by cutting out of pasteboard a big black raven, fastening on it loose cardboard feathers for the wings. On the back of each feather, in order, I wrote a question on the event, and the pupils enjoyed picking the feathers and answering the questions.

The Older Classes will consider the lesson as a study of heroism and reform. Give out the Round Table topics, and have them treated by different students. Do not fail to apply the lesson to present-day matters in our country. What national and social sins correspond to those of Israel under Ahab ? Where are we to look for an Elijah ? How should he go to work ? **How can we** become such Elijahs ?

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Ahab married Jezebel (Beecher) B.C. 934 and came to the throne B.C. 925. Elijah appeared before Ahab B.C. 912, and went to Zarephath B.C. 911.

Place. — Samaria, the capital of Israel, or Jezreel, the royal home in summer. Cherith, an unknown brook-ravine, probably in Gilead, east of the Jordan. Zarephath (New Testament, Sarepta), on the shore of the Mediterranean about eight miles south of Sidon.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

What is a prophet? Was Elijah one?
The character of Ahab.
The character of Jezebel.
The crisis in the affairs of Israel.
Elijah's training for his great work.
When and why to trust in God.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Elijah and the Secret of His Power, by F. B. Meyer. *Elijah the Prophet*, by William M. Taylor. *Elijah, His Life and Times*, by Rev. W. Milligan, D.D. Chapters on Elijah in Whyte's *Bible Characters*, Amos R. Wells's *Bible Miniatures*, Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Wilberforce's *Heroes of Hebrew History*, Wharton's *Famous Men of the Old Testament*, Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible*, Geikie's *Old Testament Characters* and *Landmarks of Old Testament History*. Principal Rowlands in *Men of the Old Testament*. Krummacher's *Elijah the Tishbite*. George Lansing Taylor's long poem, *Elijah the Reformer*. Poems by Wilton, Grahame, Keble, Mrs. Charles, Hartley Coleridge, Newton (Olney Hymns), and Peter Bayne (*The Days of Jezebel*). Sermons in Burrell's *The Spirit of the Age*, Wilson's *The Real Humanity*, Talmage's *The Masque Torn Off*, Greenhough's *Half Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery*, Morrison's *The Footsteps of the Flock*, Guthrie's *Speaking to the Heart*, Clifford's *Daily Strength for Daily Living*.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Obeying the Word of Jehovah.

I. THE STORIES OF SEVEN KINGS, 1 Kings 13 : 7–16 : 34.
   Jeroboam and his wicked successors.
   Warfare and misery.

II. ELIJAH'S BOLD PROPHECY, 1 Kings 17 : 1–7.
   The great drought foretold.
   The prophet preserved.

III. ELIJAH AT ZAREPHATH, 1 Kings 17 : 8–24.
   The widow's trustful hospitality.
   The widow's trust rewarded.

I. **THE STORIES OF SEVEN KINGS**, 1 Kings 13 : 7—16 : 34. Our last lesson studied the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam, the first king of Israel. We find ourselves to-day in the reign of Ahab, the eighth king of Israel. Let us take a brief survey of the reigns of these seven kings, and of the three kings of Judah whose reigns were contemporary :

JUDAH.		ISRAEL.
Rehoboam . . . . . Was defeated by Shishak, king of Egypt, who despoiled temple and palace. Fought with Jeroboam. Reigned 17 years.	982	982 . . . . . **Jeroboam.** Introduced idolatry. Had his wife consult Ahijah regarding his sick son, and received a prophecy of evil. The child died. Reigned 22 years.
Abijam . . . . . Fought with Jeroboam. Sinned like his father. Reigned 3 years.	966	
Asa . . . . . Abolished idolatry. Restored the worship of Jehovah. Defeated the Ethiopian Zerah, by God's help. When Baasha invaded Benjamin, obtained the help of Ben-hadad, king of Damascus, to drive him out. Not so true to Jehovah in last half of reign as in first half. Reigned 41 years.	963	961 . . . . . **Nadab.** An idolater like his father. Murdered by Baasha, Ahijah's prophecy being thus fulfilled. Reigned 2 years.
		960 . . . . . **Baasha.** A new dynasty. Warred with Asa, but was driven off by Ben-hadad. Followed Jeroboam's idolatry, and was threatened with disaster by the prophet Jehu. Reigned 24 years.
		937 . . . . . **Elah.** In the midst of a drunken carouse he was assassinated by Zimri, Jehu's prophecy being thus fulfilled. Reigned 2 years.
		936 . . . . . **Zimri.** A new dynasty. Made Tirzah his capital and set fire to it when he saw that Omri would take it, perishing in the flames. Reigned 7 days.
		936 . . . . . **Omri.** A new dynasty. A general made king by the army. Fought 5 years with Tibni.

1. And Elijah the Tish′-bīte, who was of the sojourners of Gĭl′-ĕ-ăd, said unto A′-hăb, As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

JUDAH.	ISRAEL.
	935 . . . . . **Tibni.** A rival claimant, who was followed by half of Israel. After five years of struggle he died, and Omri reigned 12 years in all. Omri built Samaria and made it the capital. He was an idolater and more wicked than his predecessors. He was strong enough to make himself felt in surrounding nations.
	925 . . . . . **Ahab.** The son of Omri. An evil king, who reigned 22 years.
Jehoshaphat . . . . 922 A good king, and greatly prospered. He reigned 25 years.	

It will be noted that while David's family remains on the throne of Judah through these sixty years, with only four kings, the troubled history of idolatrous Israel has seen eight kings and five dynasties, a sad record of terror, assassination, suicide, and civil war. It is a striking illustration of the unrest and ruin that attend wickedness, the peace and prosperity that follow obedience to the will of God.

II. **ELIJAH'S BOLD PROPHECY,** 1 Kings 17 : 1–7. The great prophet, Elijah, appears mysteriously in the history, and with startling suddenness. Nothing is told us about his father and mother or his family. He is not even called a prophet, but merely Elijah the Tishbite, and this simplicity adds to his dignity. "A greater crisis than this in which he appears does not exist in the history of the Jewish people ; and a more remarkable prophet does not claim our notice until we come to the days of Him in whom all men recognize a second Elijah." — *Milligan.* "It was Elijah and he alone, with no other instrument than the simple power of his spirit and his speech, who achieved no less a marvel than a complete revolution of the existing condition of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes." — *Ewald.* "The worst times need the best men." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

1. **And Elijah the Tishbite.** "Elijah" is a glorious name, made up of the two Hebrew designations of Deity, and signifying "Jehovah is my God." That was the life work of Elijah, to exalt Jehovah. It should be the life work of each of us. Elijah came from Tishbe, a town in Gilead, the region east of the Jordan. There was another Tishbe in Galilee. **Who was of the sojourners of Gilead.** This implies that Elijah was not a native of Gilead, but the correct reading may be "of Tishbe in Gilead," distinguished from the Tishbe in Galilee. "Gilead was wild and rugged ; its hills were covered with shaggy forests ; its awful solitudes were only broken by the dash of mountain streams ; its valleys were the haunts of fierce wild beasts. The inhabitants were wild, lawless, and unkempt. They dwelt in rude stone villages, and subsisted by keeping flocks of sheep. Elijah in his early years would probably do the work of a shepherd on those wild hills." — *F. B. Meyer.* As he grew up in his muscular, sinewy strength, filled with an intense religious earnestness, he heard with horror what was going on across the Jordan. **Said unto Ahab.** The son of Omri, the reigning king of Israel, a man of weak character, thoroughly dominated by his wicked wife, Jezebel. This woman was the daughter of Ethbaal the First, king of Tyre, a priest of Baal who had murdered his brother in order to gain the crown. Ahab married her in order to cement an alliance with the strong kingdom to the north, but in doing so he introduced into Israel the horrible worship of Baal, with all its cruelty and licentiousness. This was worse than the calf-worship inaugurated by Jeroboam, and was so regarded by Elijah and all other worshippers of Jehovah. The calf-worship worshipped Jehovah under the idolatrous form of an animal, and so broke the second commandment ; but Baal-worship departed wholly from the worship of Jehovah, and so broke the first commandment as well as the second. Elijah appears before Ahab as suddenly and mysteriously as he has entered the historical record. He was "a weird-looking man, with long, flowing hair, a mantle of sheep-skin around his shoulders, and a rugged staff in his hand." — *William M. Taylor.* His sheep-skin mantle was "tied round him, as is still the custom of the poorest, by a leathern girdle or belt,

2. And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying,

and fastened, it is likely, with the thorn of some desert shrub." — *Cunningham Geikie.* **As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth.** This form of oath was prescribed by Hebrew law ; see Deut. 6 : 13 ; Jer. 4 : 2. By these words Elijah made clear to Ahab's uneasy conscience, without definite explanation, that the drought he predicted would come as a punishment for the nation's departure from the worship of Jehovah, the only God of Israel. Jezebel had built, near Jezreel, the royal summer home, a temple to Astarte, goddess of lust, and supported its four hundred and fifty priests from her private purse. With Ahab she had built in Samaria, the capital, an immense temple for the cruel god Baal. The heathenism thus introduced spread everywhere, the priests of Jehovah were forced into hiding or driven from the land, and the worshippers of the true God were everywhere assailed with bitter persecution. **Before whom I stand.** To "stand before" any person implies, in the Hebrew, that one is a servant of that person, and is honored by that relation. Compare Prov. 22 : 29. This expression is used only by Elijah and his pupil Elisha, and twice by each, at great crises in their lives. "It is not only that Jehovah exists in some far-away corner of the universe, where he takes no interest in the affairs of men or in the operations of nature, so called, but that he is here, and that I am now in his presence, delivering his message, sustained by his strength, and protected by his power." — *William M. Taylor.* Elijah was a man "of like passions" with ourselves, and what he says of himself may be true of us. "Let us cultivate this habitual recognition of the presence of God ; it will lift us above all other fear." — *F. B. Meyer.* **There shall not be dew nor rain these years.** A long drought in the reign of Ethbaal of Tyre is mentioned by Menander. This was not an arbitrary punishment, but was just what had been foretold if the people turned from the worship of Jehovah to serve other gods (Deut. 11 : 11, 13–17). There is doubtless a reference to this prophecy in Rev. 11 : 5, 6. **But according to my word.** Elijah's word, but only as expressing God's will, for all he did in this matter was the result of prayer (Jas. 5 : 17, 18). Elijah "prayed with prayer" says the margin. "We do everything in our prayers but truly pray." — *Alexander Whyte.* Note also that this holds out hope of the end of the drought, if the people should repent ; all God's threats have this "if" in them. With this saying, the prophet vanished. "It was like the flash of the lightning, sharp as a blazing sword in its sudden vividness, but not tarrying for a moment, revealing everything, and gone as it reveals it." — *Wilberforce.*

From a photograph.
Ruined Tower at Jezreel.

Illustration. "We are reminded of a similar passage in the life of the greatest of modern reformers, Martin Luther, who in many respects resembled Elijah, especially in the strength of his faith. It was when he faced the emperor and the assembled princes of Europe, in the memorable Diet of Worms, and declared his unswerving adherence to the principles he was commanded to renounce. Alone, defenceless, and apparently forsaken ; knowing full well that the tribunal which he had defied had power to crush him, yet he was perfectly fearless, simply because he feared God." — *Principal David Rowlands.*

Illustration. "Elijah is the John Wycliffe of his day, searching out the corruptions and abuses of religion, and dragging them to the light. He is the John Knox, terrifying crowned heads by his prayers and words more than the appearing of ten thousand armed men." — *Rev. John Clifford, D.D.*

2. **And the word of Jehovah came unto him.** "He did not need to go to search for it ; it *came* to him. And so it will come to you. It may come through the Word

3. Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Chĕ'-rĭth, that is before the Jordan.

4. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5. So he went and did according unto the word of Jehovah; for he went and dwelt by the brook Chĕ'-rĭth, that is before the Jordan.

---

of God; or through a distinct impression made on your heart by the Holy Ghost; or through circumstances: but it will find you out, and tell you what you are to do." — *F. B. Meyer.*

3. **Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward.** Like every messenger of God, Elijah was to leave his words to work their result, and not wait and watch and worry. We are not told whether Elijah found Ahab in Samaria or in Jezreel; he was to go eastward from there.

St. George's Convent, Brook Cherith.
The Monastery marks the spot where Elijah hid himself.

Illustration. Possibly Elijah was sent into retirement to teach him humility. "When Alexander T. Stewart, the merchant prince, was remonstrated with for discharging an old and trusted employee, he gave this reason: 'Whenever a man thinks himself to be indispensable, I make it a rule to discharge him.'" — *David James Burrell, D.D.*

And hide thyself by the brook Cherith. By the Hebrew word translated brook is meant a ravine such as would usually form, in the winter, the bed of a torrent. Some of these ravines in Palestine are five hundred feet or more in depth, and in their dark sides are many caves in one of which Elijah might have dwelt securely. As this ravine was east of the Jordan, "it cannot be identified with *Wady el-kelt* to the west of Jericho. The retreat must be sought in some recess of the Gilead uplands with which doubtless Elijah had been familiar in his earlier days." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* "Cherith was part of the training for Carmel." — *Alexander Maclaren.* It was there that Elijah learned to trust God implicitly, and in that trust there is power. **That is before the Jordan**; that is, east of the river.

4. **Thou shalt drink of the brook.** Though all other brooks in the land should fail, that would not. **And I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.** All resources are under God's command, and he can summon the most unlikely aid to strengthen and bless his children. "Children of God, get up out of your despondency. The Lord never had so many ravens as he has this morning." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

"Let the King's business be our first endeavor,
And all these needful things are promised still —
Signed, sealed by Truth immutable forever:
To all who watch God's hand and do God's will
Bread shall be given and water shall be sure,
Long as this earth and yonder heavens endure." — *Richard Wilton.*

5. **So he went and did according to the word of Jehovah.** Hiding in that ravine was not heroic or stirring work, but it was God's bidding, and so Elijah did it. "When we are laid aside from active usefulness and consigned to the solitude of a sick-chamber, let us not fret ourselves with the thought that we are thereby disqualified

6. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

7. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

for working for his glory. Our work, then, is to be quiet, and to manifest patience under his hand." — *William M. Taylor.* So Milton sung in his blindness :

"Thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Illustration. F. W. Boreham tells how one morning he was talking with a gifted New Zealand preacher, and asked, "Can a man be quite sure that, in the hour of perplexity, he will be rightly led?" The preacher sprang from his chair in his earnestness. "I am certain of it," he exclaimed, "if he will but give God time!"

From an old print.

Elijah Fed by the Ravens

6. **And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and . . . in the evening.** The original Hebrew was written without vowels, which were not added until the seventh century A.D at the earliest. Now the consonants of "ravens" in Hebrew, ʻ o R ĕ B ī M, might as well have been written with other vowels, ʻ a R ĕ-B ī M, which would have meant "Arabs." Some have thought, therefore, that Arabs brought food to Elijah; but in that case his retreat would soon have been discovered, for the Arabs would be as desirous as Ahab to find Elijah and compel him to end the long drought. Moreover, why should the Arabs visit him twice a day when they might as well have brought him food for several days at once, and thus greatly lessened the chance of discovery? It has been objected that the ravens were regarded as unclean birds by the Hebrews; but God uses the most unlikely means, and in his eye nothing is common or unclean, as he showed Peter in the vision of the great sheet full of all kinds of animals. **And he drank of the brook.** The continuance of the flow of the brook was probably not a miracle, for the brook dried up at last, but the choice of that particular brook in the knowledge that it would hold out for so long was miraculous. In that quiet spot Elijah drank of more than the brook, he drank deep of the river of God's peace and power.

"Farewell, my Loneliness!
I that had thought to curse thee, come to bless.
Deep skies and glowing stars in thee I found.
A stream ran through the sandy wilderness
And roses blossomed on the desert ground." — *M. E. Coleridge.*

7. **After a while . . . the brook dried up.** Literally, "after days," which in some places, and perhaps here, means "after a year." "The brook dried up, although it would have been as easy for the Almighty to supply water by miracle as either flesh or bread. Thus the prophet was taught that, cared for as he was, he was not wholly separated from his people in their sufferings." — *Milligan.*

III. **ELIJAH AT ZAREPHATH,** 1 Kings 17 : 8–24. "Faith made Elijah all he became; and faith will do as much for us, if only we can exercise it as he did, to appropriate the might of the eternal God." — *F. B. Meyer.*

8. **And the word of Jehovah came unto him.** "He was not told what was to be done next till the channel was dry, and the pebbles in its bed bleaching in the sun.

8. And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying,

9. Arise, get thee to Zăr′-ĕ-phăth, which belongeth to Sī′-dŏn, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee.

10. So he arose and went to Zăr′-ĕ-phăth; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand.

12. And she said, As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it forth unto me, and afterward make for thee and for thy son.

God makes us sometimes wait on beside a diminishing rivulet and keeps us ignorant of the next step, till it is dry. Patience is an element of strength." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

9. **Arise, get thee to Zarephath.** The Arabic name of a village near by the ruins of Zarephath is Sarfend, preserving the ancient name. Zarephath was a considerable city, situated on the seacoast north of Tyre and south of Sidon, nearer to Sidon. **Which belongeth to Sidon.** Elijah was sent to minister to and receive aid from a woman of the very same heathen race which had sent Baal-worship into Israel. The lesson of wide charity which is to be drawn from this event is pointed out by our Lord himself (Luke 4 : 25, 26). "May not Elijah have been meant to learn that not every Baal-worshiper was necessarily corrupt or wholly insincere?" — *F. W. Farrar.* **And dwell there.** The command to live there involves a promise of a livelihood there. **Behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee.** "Israel has lost her prophet; a poor widow has found him. Thus it fares with a people who are slow of turning to the Lord." — *Krummacher.*

"Say not, my soul, 'From whence can God relieve my care?
Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere."

10. **So he arose and went to Zarephath.** He probably took the route east of the Jordan as far as Dan. Our Lord, when he visited the same region, went through the country west of the Jordan. **And when he came to the gate of the city.** Zarephath was a place of some importance, with a wall and a city gate. **Behold, a widow was there gathering sticks.** "This was not a promising sign; it only proved her poverty." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **And he . . . said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water.** Surely a mild request from God's mighty prophet! "Every stage of Elijah's course is a humbling stage." — *George Matheson.*

11. **As she was going . . . he . . . said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread.** Elijah asked this "to find out whether she were the person to whom he had been sent." — *Cunningham Geikie.*

12. **And she said, As Jehovah thy God liveth.** Though a Baal-worshipper, the widow knew something of the true God, and perhaps she had the beginnings of faith in him. **I have not a cake.** Bread in Oriental countries is baked in flat, round cakes. **But a handful of meal in the jar.** "The famine may have already extended to Phœnicia; or, since the country depended upon Israel for supplies, the distress may have been only the reflex effect of the famine in Israel." — *Ellicott.* **And a little oil in the cruse.** The cruse was "a small earthen vessel or flask." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* **I am gathering two sticks, that . . . we may eat it and die.** "It was not enough that Elijah must seek protection from persecution in a city of idolaters, but, worse and more trying still, he is thrown for bread in famine on a poor widow." — *Thomas Guthrie.*

13. **And Elijah said unto her, Fear not.** Notice that these words were often also on the lips of Christ. "God gives the promise first, and then asks for the faith of man." — *Joseph Parker.* **Make me thereof a little cake first.** This must have

14. For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, The jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth.

15. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days.

16. The jar of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake by Elijah.

---

seemed to the widow an unfeeling and selfish request, but "in readiness to help others we often best show that preparation of the heart which makes us ready for being helped ourselves." — *Milligan.* "The barrel would have been empty by nightfall, if the meal in it had been used for the woman and her son." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

14. **Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel.** Elijah thus introduces his God to the worshipper of Baal: he is a God of plenty, of comfort, and of life. **The jar of meal shall not waste**; that is, be used up. God does not always reward kindness and obedience in this way, with material prosperity, but sometimes with unfailing stores of inward peace, which are far better than full jars of meal. **Neither shall the cruse of oil fail.** "The prediction of the undiminishing stores demanded as much faith from its speaker as from its hearer, and the raising of the widow's dead son even more. It was by such experiences as these that Jehovah was training his servant up to that sublimity of faith and courage which he evinced on Mount Carmel." — *Hastings.* **Until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth.** "No doubt there was an indefinable air about the prophet that made her feel he was asking with authority." — *Rev. G. H. Morrison, D.D.*

15. **She went and did according to the saying of Elijah.** "The noblest faith of all is the faith that does the right and Christlike thing, whatever it may cost, trusting God with all that may follow." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.* "The doing of the apparently impossible is the special duty which this widow's story teaches." — *Rev. William T. Wilson.* **She, and he, and her house, did eat many days.** Literally, "days," perhaps a year, as in verse 7.

"Then let no doubt your mind assail:
Remember God has said,
'The cruse and barrel shall not fail,
My people shall be fed.'" — *John Newton.*

16. **The jar of meal wasted not . . . according to the word of Jehovah.** Thus Elijah came to know that God's word never fails. "If we may so say, it was worth God's while to work miracles, to make Elijah. The highest end of creation is the production of God-fearing men." — *Alexander Maclaren.* "There is only one book that would have told such a story in such a place. The writer stops the march of great events to open a cottage door and show us a picture of humblest life." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.* Significantly, this is the only event in Elijah's life to which Christ refers.

Illustration. "Have you no talents and powers that are like the barrel in Zarephath, and the cruse? Is there nothing in your house (the house of brain and character) that will fail, unless you trust God and use it? There is a terrible epitaph on an old Roman tomb, *Quod edi et bibi, mecum habeo* — what I ate and drank I have with me. But I am certain that the widow of Zarephath would never write that upon her headstone. She had learned the truth of these words of John Wesley, 'What I gave away, I have still.' Are any of us beginning to find that?" — *Rev. G. H. Morrison, D.D.*

"Is thy cruse of comfort failing? Rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine it shall serve thee and thy brother.
Love divine will fill thy storehouse, or thy handful still renew;
Scanty fare for one will often make a royal feast for two.

"For the heart grows rich in giving; all its wealth is living grain;
Seeds which mildew in the garner, scattered, fill with gold the plain.
Is thy burden hard and heavy? Do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden; God will bear both it and thee."
— *Elizabeth Charles.*

THE WIDOW'S TRUST REWARDED. "Elijah was a great man. There was a great mass of manhood in Elijah." — *Alexander Whyte.* Nowhere does he so greatly show

this as in the restoration to life of the widow's son. We are reminded at once of the other Syro-Phœnician woman of Matt. 15 : 21–28, and of Christ's healing of her daughter. When the lad died, his mother seemed to charge Elijah with it, as if his holiness, shining over against her dark sins, had brought them to God's attention, and her son's death had been sent as a punishment. Elijah felt the implied reproach ; he was God's prophet, and should not God have kept this great sorrow from the widow who was caring for him ? Therefore it was, as it were, for God's honor as well as his own that he prayed fervently, stretching himself three times upon the boy's dead body. And God heard his prayer, thus increasing Elijah's faith for the great test which was before him. Thus the widow's faith also was increased, and she expressed a belief in Elijah's God, though she did not at the same time disavow her idolatry.

"Ah, who can tell how tenderness sleeps 'neath the sternest face,
And adamantine heroes catch from tears their noblest grace."
— *George Lansing Taylor.*

LESSON III. — January 15.

ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE OF BAAL WORSHIP. — 1 Kings 18 : 1–46.

PRINT vs. 20–24, 30, 36–39.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.* — 1 John 5 : 4.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 2 : 1–3, 7–12.
Reference Material : Josh. 24 : 14–28 ; Eph. 6 : 10–20.
Primary Topic : God Answers Elijah's Prayer.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 18 : 20–39. Print vs. 20–24, 30, 36–39.
Memory Verse : Ask, and it shall be given you. Matt. 7 : 7.
Junior Topic : One Man against Four Hundred and Fifty.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 18 : 20–39. Print vs. 20–24, 30, 36–39.
Memory Verse : Ps. 118 : 6.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : Jehovah's Victorious Champion.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Modern Evils : How to Fight Them.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

In the Primary and Junior Classes arrange beforehand with several of the pupils to tell the lesson story at the beginning, one after the other, clear through. This repetition will fix the lesson facts in the minds of the class, and each of the narrators will be eager to make his or her story as good as possible. Then the teacher will apply the story to our prayers and their answers, and to our life choices — for God or against him.

In the Intermediate and Senior Classes prepare two altars made of pieces of stone (or of wood painted stone color), one being of twelve stones. Place on the Baal altar a set of questions regarding Ahab, Jezebel, and the Baal priests, and on the altar of Jehovah a set of questions on Elijah. Each question will be on a separate slip of paper. The questions will be drawn in turn by the pupils and answered.

In the Young People's and Adult Classes appoint a member to tell the story of the Carmel contest, bringing out points not commonly known. Then pass to a study of present-day evils and the Elijah way of overcoming them. Your list will depend upon the circumstances of the time and place, but may include intemperance, gambling, business dishonesty, social frivolity, and political ambition. Assign these to different members of the class in advance, each to lead a discussion on his theme.

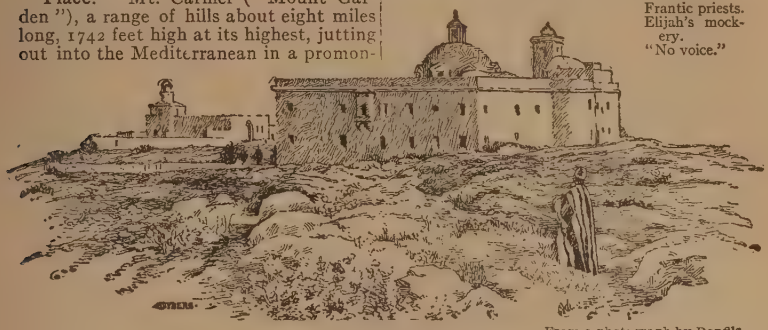
THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

All the works on Elijah named in the last lesson. Chapters in Huntington's *The Causes of the Soul*, Dawson's *The Threshold of Manhood*, Rowland's *Sermons on Historical Subjects*, Whiton's *New Points to Old Texts*, Burrell's *The Gospel of Gladness* and *The Wayfarers of the Bible*, Spurgeon's *Sermons*, Vols. III. and XV., Douglas's *Sermons*, McNeill's *Sermons*, Vol. III., Banks's *The Great Portraits of the Bible*, Hazard's *The College Year*, Watkinson's *The Education of the Heart*, Gregg's *New Epistles from Old Lands*, Moody's *Great Joy*, Stanley's *Addresses and Sermons in America*, Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible*. On Carmel, George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*. Poems by Bertha Morton ("Ahab's Steward"), Peter Bayne ("The Days of Jezebel"), Sir Walter Scott, Richard Wilton ("Elijah on Mt. Carmel"), George Lansing Taylor ("Elijah the Reformer"), John Newton (*Olney Hymns*).

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Beecher places this event, conjecturally, at B.C. 909.

Place. — Mt. Carmel ("Mount Garden"), a range of hills about eight miles long, 1742 feet high at its highest, jutting out into the Mediterranean in a promontory 556 feet high. It is opposite the Sea of Galilee, and southwest of the Plain of Esdraelon and of the River Kishon, the chief stream of the region.



Convent on Mount Carmel. From a photograph by Bonfils.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Jehovah's Triumph through Elijah.

I. OBADIAH, AN UNWILLING MESSENGER, vs. 1–19.
- Obadiah's courage.
- Obadiah's timidity.
- Elijah's bold demand.

II. ELIJAH'S CONFIDENT CHALLENGE, vs. 20–24.
- "How long go ye limping?"
- One against four hundred and fifty.
- A conclusive test proposed.

III. THE FAILURE OF BAAL, vs. 25–29.
- Frantic priests.
- Elijah's mockery.
- "No voice."

IV. THE TRIUMPH OF JEHOVAH, vs. 46.
- The flooded altar.
- The fire falls.
- "Jehovah, he is God."

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

- Carmel of to-day.
- How Elijah won his influence.
- Idolatrous worship in modern times.
- The Baals worshipped in our own land.
- How modern forms of idolatry may be overthrown.
- Great periods of miracles in the Old Testament and why miracles were especially needed then.

I. OBADIAH, AN UNWILLING MESSENGER, vs. 1–19. Obadiah — there is no reason to think that he was the minor prophet of that name — was "the governor over Ahab's house, a kind of mayor of the palace, and probably the second man in the kingdom. But though thus high in that idolatrous and self-willed court, he bravely kept true to the ancient faith. His name is his character, for it means 'servant of Jehovah.' It was not a light thing to be a worshipper of the God of Israel in Ahab's court." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

This high officer had dared to preserve one hundred prophets of Jehovah and hide them in two companies of fifty each in one of the many extensive caves with which the limestone rock of Palestine is honeycombed, feeding them with bread and water, the food that he could get to them with least likelihood of discovery. "It may have been that the divine providential reason why Obadiah was kept in the palace of Ahab was that he might save these men. We may not know why God sometimes leaves us in an unpleasant or dangerous place, but we may always be sure that he has some purpose in it." — *J. R. Miller.*

"Like a bright candle held at cottage door
That shows the darkness, only felt before,
Hand-sheltered which can brave the circling blast
That else had made its first glad ray the last,
So Obadiah like a lonely light
Shines to us from the gloom of heathen night;
Through varied vistas of long ages past
We view his faith and wonder it could last.
It could not but for God's all-sheltering hand
That kept it shining in that heathen land." — *Bertha Morton.*

20. So Ā′-hăb sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Cär′-mĕl.

Israel was in a fearful plight. "Mendelssohn's oratorio, 'Elijah,' opens with a wondrous passage, which tries to represent the despair of a whole nation perishing from thirst. After giving vent to the despair, first in sullen, restless murmurings, it pictures it as gathering at length a terrible cumulative strength which bursts forth in appalling cries of heart-rending importunate agony. Only the genius of a Mendelssohn, who had at his command the world of sound, dare try to picture a nation in the agonies of thirst." — *Rev. David Gregg, D.D.*

Because Elijah had said that the drought would cease only at his bidding, Ahab had sent all through Israel, and all through the neighboring nations, to seek the prophet. He had doubtless inquired in Judah, Edom, Moab, Philistia, and Phœnicia, perhaps farther, even in Egypt. He had even required oaths of the rulers of these countries, declaring that Elijah could not be found in their respective lands.

Now, however, in the third year of the drought and famine, Ahab set out on a still more desperate and eager quest. The springs and brooks and rivers were all dried up. The grass, therefore, had failed, and there was nothing for the animals to eat. They might import a little food for men, but not for the beasts. The king, therefore, headed an expedition in search for grass, and sent Obadiah off with another party in a different direction. As Obadiah was thus scouring the country, perhaps in the Carmel region, he was suddenly confronted by the much-sought Elijah, who had received word from the Lord that the drought would soon cease, and that he must show himself to Ahab.

Recognizing at once the dread servant of Jehovah, Obadiah fell on his face before him. Without preamble, Elijah bade him go and tell Ahab that Elijah was there. Elijah knew the rash and impulsive character of the king, and doubtless feared that he would be slain out of hand if he presented himself to Ahab without previous notice.

But Obadiah also knew full well the character of the king, and naturally demurred at the errand. "How am I to know," he asked, "that you will be here when the king comes here to meet you? Will not God's orders probably take you away somewhere else, just as for these three years you have been spirited off from place to place so that we could not find you? And when I lead Ahab on that wild-goose chase, he will surely slay me." Elijah had to quiet Obadiah's fears by taking his most solemn oath (compare v. 15 with 1 Kings 17 : 1) that he would await Ahab in that spot.

Then Obadiah ventured to tell the great news to Ahab: he had not found water or grass, but he had found what was far better, he had found the powerful prophet who could bring the rain.

"Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" was Ahab's indignant cry when he saw Elijah, so prone are we all to lay the blame for our wrong-doing on some one else. "*Thou* art the troubler of Israel," Elijah answered sternly, "thou, and thy father Omri and his house, through disobedience to God's commands, and following the false gods of the heathen. Now bring before me the prophets of these false gods, four hundred and fifty prophets of the cruel Baal, and four hundred prophets of the lustful Asherah, patronized by your own queen, Jezebel. Bring these to Mount Carmel, and summon all Israel to the same place."

With this bold command Elijah answered the king's weak bluster, and Ahab felt obliged to obey. If he refused, what hope was there of the end of the famine?

II. **ELIJAH'S CONFIDENT CHALLENGE**, vs. 20–24. "Elijah is the first great Protestant, the first great Puritan, the first preacher of the cardinal truth that in religion there can be no compromise between principle and policy, no divided heart in the service of God." — *Rev. James M. Whiton, Ph.D.* The event we are now to study was the greatest event in his career, one of the most important and thrilling episodes in Old Testament history.

20. **So Ahab sent.** His ready compliance shows what an ascendancy the bold character of Elijah, with his calm trust in Jehovah, had gained even over the idolatrous king. Thus worldlings may mock at Christians, and affect to scorn them, but they honor them in their hearts. **Unto all the children of Israel.** Doubtless relays of swift messengers spread the word. It would be several days before the entire number could be gathered. **Probably Elijah spent those days, praying earnestly, in some cave on Mount Carmel. And gathered the prophets together.** The people

21. And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said, How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Bā'-ăl, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Bā'-ăl's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

---

also came to witness the contest. **Unto Mount Carmel.** Immediately west of the Sea of Galilee, the one projection of the Palestinian seacoast. "In its separation from other hills, its position on the sea, its visibleness from all quarters of the country; in its uselessness for war or traffic; in its profusion of flowers, its high platforms and groves with their glorious prospects of land and sea, Carmel must have been a place of retreat and of worship from the earliest times. It was claimed for Baal; but even before Elijah's day an altar had stood upon it for Jehovah. About this altar — as on a spot whose sanctity they equally felt — the rival faiths met in that contest in which for most of us the history of Carmel consists." — *George Adam Smith.* "The precise spot on the long range of Carmel where the sacrifices took place cannot, of course, be determined with certainty; but none can be found more suitable than *el-Muhraka* ('the place of burning'), at the foot of which is *Tel el-Kasis* ('the priests' mound'), the place traditionally associated with the massacre of the prophets of Baal. *El-Muhraka* stands nearly 1600 feet above sea-level, nearly four miles south of the highest summit; it has no view of the sea, which, however, can readily be obtained by a few minutes' ascent. Hard by is a spring, from which water might have been drawn for the drenching of the altar." — *New Century Bible.*

21. **And Elijah came near unto all the people.** "He has the air of one who has a solemn work to do. There is gravity in his deportment, firmness in his countenance, and lightning in his eye. Unabashed by the myriad throng before him, undazzled by the splendid garments of the idol-serving priests, unappalled by the haughty mien of Ahab and his courtiers, he takes his place over against his powerful adversaries. Alone he seems in that immense multitude, and yet he is not alone, for God is with him." — *William M. Taylor.* **And said, How long go ye limping between the two sides?** "How long *wriggle* ye between two opinions?" — *C. H. Spurgeon.* With the one hand they would reach up to Jehovah, and with the other reach down to Baal. The two religions were so different that they could only limp between them. Each one of us has to face Elijah's challenge. "Growth involves choice. There are always 'two opinions' — one which tacitly worships the things of sense and is satisfied with the outward appearance, and one which seeks the spirit." — *Caroline Hazard.* **If Jehovah be God, follow him.** "To Elijah's clear faith, which was almost sight, there was no *if*. He did not doubt for a moment that Jehovah was God." — *F. B. Meyer.*

Illustration. "An eccentric man once built his house on the extreme western coast of Ireland, because he wished to reside next to an American town. In a sense he did live next to one, yet the Atlantic Ocean stretched between. When we have brought the worldly, selfish, or sensual life as near to the Christian life as possible, an ocean wider and deeper than the Atlantic will roll between them. We must belong to one or the other." — *Rev. William L. Watkinson, D.D.*

But if Baal, then follow him. The people had the opinion that both Jehovah and Baal were God, and that they could follow both. "One or the other," said Elijah; "there can be only one God. Make your choice." It was a struggle between monotheism and polytheism. **And the people answered him not a word.** They were wedded to their idolatry, and the prophet's cry awakened no response in their enslaved souls.

> "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
> In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
> Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
> Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,
> And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light."
> — *James Russell Lowell, "The Present Crisis."*

22. **Then said Elijah . . . I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah.** The people's silence showed Elijah how lonely he was. To be sure, Obadiah had one hundred prophets of Jehovah hidden somewhere in a cave, but they were afraid to come out and speak out. They might as well not exist, so far as testimony for the true God was concerned.

23. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under.

24. And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Jehovah: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

Illustration. " Dare to stand alone. Where would the English Bible have been if Wycliffe had not defied the anathema of Rome, or the right of popular government if Hampden had not died upon the field, or the right of human liberty if Wilberforce had not lived down the enmity of capitalists and the scornful laughter of a hundred drawing-rooms ? " — *Rev. W. J. Dawson, D.D.*

But Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. The Greek translation, the Septuagint, adds here a mention of Jezebel's four hundred prophets of the Asherah (a female deity, probably regarded as the wife of Baal). If that was not in the original, it may be that the masterful queen was able to prevent the attendance of her own special priests.

23. **Let them therefore give us two bullocks.** Each was to be cut up and the chosen pieces laid on the altar, but the wood placed underneath each was not to be set on fire. **And let them choose one bullock for themselves.** Their test was to come first. " The Baal prophets are given every advantage in priority of action. Error is best unmasked by being allowed free opportunity to do its best ; for the more favorable the circumstances of trial, the more signal the defeat." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

24. **And call ye on the name of your god.** They worshipped many gods, but they might call on any one of them they pleased, or all of them together. **And I will call on the name of Jehovah.** Elijah sadly took it for granted that the Baalites would *not* call on the name of Jehovah. " Your god " had become Baal. **And the God that answereth by fire.** Baal was the sun-god, the god of fire. If he could not supply fire, he certainly could do nothing. " And every Israelite could recall many an occasion in the glorious past when Jehovah had answered by fire. It burnt in the acacia bush, which was its own fuel ; it shone like a beacon-light in the van of the desert march ; it gleamed on the brow of Sinai ; it smote the murmuring crowds ; it fell upon the sacrifices which awaited it on the brazen altar. It was the emblem of Jehovah, and the sign of his acceptance of his people's service." — *F. B. Meyer.* **Let him be God.** We are forbidden to " tempt " God, that is, to propose tests of the divine power that call for miracles arbitrarily. But that, which would be mere unauthorized presumption on our part, is very different from what Elijah did on Mount Carmel, for it was a fearful crisis in the history of God's chosen people, and Elijah was led by God's Spirit to do what he did. For an illustration of the forbidden kind of testing of God see Browning's *Red Cotton Nightcap Country*, whose hero flings himself from a tower expecting angels to bear him up, but is dashed to death on the ground. **And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.** Every one could see that Elijah's proposal was perfectly fair. " Religion appeals to reason. Not until we are satisfied with its credentials ought we to receive it." — *Principal Rowlands.*

III. **THE FAILURE OF BAAL**, vs. 25-29. Then Elijah bade the priests of Baal to make trial of their cause first, since they were many against one. They accepted the challenge, for not to do so would at once have proclaimed their defeat to the people. They first cut their bullock in pieces, selected the portions that they thought most acceptable to Baal, and arranged them in order on top of the wood which they had placed on their altar. Then from morning till noon they called on their god : " O Baal, hear ! O Baal, answer ! " Over and over they shouted, heathen fashion, " thinking they would be heard for their much speaking," but all was fruitless. " There was no voice, nor any that answered " from heaven. As their empty prayer proved unavailing, they added a frenzied dance like that of the whirling dervishes of to-day, or like the religious dances of the red Indians. Beginning slowly, they increased their gyrations, leaping and shouting and working themselves up into temporary insanity, until they began to fall down insensible. But all was useless ; no fire fell from the skies upon that impious altar.

30. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down.

36. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

Then, at noon, Elijah began to taunt them, that he might emphasize their folly before the people. "That's right!" cried the prophet of Jehovah. "Shout and scream, louder and louder. Your Baal is a god, but maybe he is deaf. Maybe he is in a brown study. Maybe he is too busy to attend you. Maybe he is off on a journey. Or maybe he is taking a nap. Wake him up, you Baalites! Scream louder! Whirl faster! Leap higher!"

Stung by this mockery, the idolatrous priests even increased their raving. They shouted still more, and danced with still greater vigor, and began to cut their bodies with knives and daggers, their blood spurting out over them from these wild gashes as if they would offer themselves as sacrifices. With almost superhuman endurance, for they thought their all was at stake, they kept up this madness all the afternoon; and still — what sadder words are to be found in the Old Testament? — "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." This scene and these words sum up the frustrated hopes and aching emptiness of all the vast heathen world. "Heathenism has no true prayer. Wild cries and passionate desires, flung upwards to an unloved god, are not prayer; and that solace and anchor of the troubled soul is wanting in all the dreary lands given up to idolatry." — *Alexander Maclaren.* "We are told by unbelievers that prayer has no efficacy except its influence on the petitioner. This is true of all prayers except those which are offered to the true God." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.* "The prophets of Baal failed, and failed ignobly. In the end every false thing fails." — *Rev. David Gregg, D.D.*

IV. **THE TRIUMPH OF JEHOVAH**, vs. 30–46. "That was a fair field of battle; what can be a better test of religion than its power to impart vital fire! It was a field on which Elijah was sure to win." — *George Matheson.* It was one of the greatest triumphs on record.

30. **And Elijah said unto all the people.** He would deal with them rather than with their weak king; their verdict was what he sought. **Come near unto me.** If the people were not close by to watch, the defeated priests of Baal would be sure to say afterwards that Elijah had secretly set the wood on fire. **And all the people came near unto him.** They had doubtless been surrounding the Baal priests, whose altar was at some distance. **And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down.** Evidently in former days there had been a sanctuary for Jehovah on Mount Carmel, but it had fallen into neglect.

ELIJAH'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE TEST, vs. 31–35. Like a true prophet, Elijah recognized the essential unity of the divided kingdom, and made his altar of twelve stones, including in it two stones for the sundered southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Thus erecting his symbolic altar, which meant that the whole nation should worship the one true God who had given them the land, Elijah dug around it a trench inclosing ground that would be sown by two seahs (twenty-one quarts) of seed — about 1800 square yards, say 42×42 yards.

Then Elijah cut up his bullock, laid the selected pieces on the wood which he had placed on the altar, and to show that there could be no concealed fire he had it all thoroughly drenched with water. Four barrels of water were poured over the altar, — water that could be obtained on Mount Carmel, which is never subject to droughts, but drains of their moisture the breezes that blow over it from the Mediterranean. Once more the barrels were filled and the water poured over the altar, and this was done yet a third time, till the altar, and the ground around it, and the trench as well, were completely flooded. Then the prophet was ready for the great test.

36. **And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening oblation.** "The evening sacrifice was probably offered then, as it certainly was at a later day, at the ninth hour, or 3 P.M." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **That Elijah the prophet came near.** His face must have been aglow with religious fervor as he offered his wonderful

37. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38. Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

prayer. **And said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel.** "This solemn address would carry back the thoughts of the pious to the burning bush of Horeb, and the words there spoken (Ex. 3 : 6, 15, 16 ; 4 : 5) ; for there only had this mysterious formula been used before. Its use now was calculated to stir their faith and prepare them in some degree for God's answering by fire." — *Speaker's Bible.* **Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel.** This is what Elijah had set out to prove ; see verse 21. **And that I am thy servant.** "It is God, not his own credit, about which Elijah thinks first. For himself, all that he desires is to be known as an obedient servant." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **And that I have done all these things at thy word.** Thus Christ also (John 14 : 10) was eager to be understood as originating nothing, but merely serving as the tool in the hands of his Father.

Elijah's Sacrifice.

37. **Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me.** With similar words the Baal priests called upon their god, but in what a different fashion and spirit ! **That this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God.** The one and only true God. **And that thou hast turned their heart back again.** Elijah knew well that, though the people had to turn their own hearts away from their idolatry, they could do it only in the power that Jehovah would freely give them, if they asked him. Elijah's prayer, so brief, so calm, so confident, was the greatest possible contrast to the wild ravings of the Baalites. It is a model for our prayers in its glad recognition of the Lord, its superb trust in him, its personal humility, its earnest desire for the advancement of God's cause. It has notable points of contact with the Lord's prayer.

38. **Then the fire of Jehovah fell.** "The short prayer of faith does in a moment what all the long day of crying could not do." — *Alexander Maclaren.* "The fire of the Lord is the lightning (Gen. 19 : 24, etc.)." — *New Century Bible.*

"He ceased. See! see! A ruddier flash o'erspreads the pomp on high!
An awful cloud of beamy fire sweeps eddying down the sky!
And from its sparkling bosom fall broad sheets of blinding flame,
While thunders shock the trembling world, and peal Jehovah's name!
The fiery whirlpool falls! In flame consumed th' oblation flies!
And water, dust, and calcined stones, have vanished from their eyes!
The trench alone, with cinders strewn, remains to mark the pyre,
Where God Most High, at a mortal's cry, answered from heaven by fire!"
— *George Lansing Taylor.*

39. **And when all the people saw it.** The miracle was clearly visible to all the vast throng. **They fell on their faces.** As Saul and his companions fell prone before the great light on the Damascus road. **And they said, Jehovah, he is God ; Jehovah, he is God.** It was a manly decision ; and, though the people proved fickle, at least

39. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.

for the time they were sincere. This is the conclusion to which every honest, brave soul must come. God has proved himself, by every test of history and experience, of power and wisdom, and love. To refuse allegiance is to proclaim one's self an ignorant dolt, a weak procrastinator, a groveling coward, or an abject slave to sin. "Halt no longer, but decide for God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and, by the help of his Holy Spirit, slay every Baalitish principle within you." — *William M. Taylor.*

Illustration. "A red republican in Paris during the Reign of Terror was telling in a street-corner group how they were going to pull down the churches and everything that could perpetuate religion, when a peasant standing by said quietly, 'You must not forget, citizen, to pull down the stars.' So long as there is a star in heaven there will be an oracle through which a voice will proclaim, 'The Lord he is the God.'" — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

ON MOUNT CALVARY. "I can imagine some of you saying, 'If I had been on Mount Carmel and seen that, I should have believed it.' But I will tell you of a mount on which occurred another scene. That was a wonderful scene on Carmel, but it does not compare with the scene on Calvary. Look there! God's own beloved Son hanging between two thieves and crying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' This has been the wonder of ages." — *D. L. Moody.* Who can help crying, as he witnesses that scene, "Jesus Christ, he is my God!"

THE EXECUTION OF THE PROPHETS OF BAAL. As soon as the people had rendered their verdict, Elijah rendered his. As Jehovah's prophets had been slain at the instigation of Baal's prophets (verse 4), so Baal's prophets should be slain. It was the same principle in accordance with which murderers are executed to-day. Near by was the brook Kishon. It is flowing still with a perennial stream, at least in its lower reaches. Elijah would not have the neighborhood of God's holy altar desecrated with the blood of these evil men, but he commanded the people to take all the Baal prophets to the Kishon. Filled with indignation against these men, whose cruel falseness lay open to the sight of all, the people promptly obeyed Elijah, and with his own hands, doubtless aided by others, Jehovah's prophet completed his task and executed them there.

We cannot believe that the great miracle would make any impression on the hard hearts of these prophets. "They were interested in the degradation of the people. They were the deceivers rather than the deceived; and they must have been marked by peculiar obduracy, when for the three years during which the drought lasted they still made, as they must have made, every effort to prevent the eyes of Israel being opened. Nothing, too, could be more terribly explicit than the law of Moses condemning to death those who endeavored to seduce the people to idolatry (Deut. 13 : 6–9)." — *Milligan.*

THE END OF THE GREAT DROUGHT. This terrible work being ended, Elijah turned to rejoicing. Winds from the Mediterranean, from the west and southwest, carry rain to Palestine, and the quick ear of Elijah, trained by his outdoor life, had caught the faint whispers of a coming storm. He, with the king and the people, had descended Mount Carmel on the eastern side, and now he bids Ahab return to the scene of the contest and prepare another sacrifice, this time a sacrifice of thanksgiving, preliminary to a feast of plenty, for "there is the sound of abundance of rain."

Then Ahab went up to the crest of the mount to feast, but the prophet went up to pray. "Most men in Elijah's place would have thought that they had done enough for one day and could afford to rest and to partake of the feast; but 'no measure of success could possibly seem in Elijah's eyes so great that he could afford to slight the duties of watchfulness and prayer.'" — *Rev. W. R. Huntington, D.D.* So God gave to his perseverance the crowning blessing.

"Most mountains of this height (1800 feet above sea level) have stately heads. But Carmel displays only a straight back which has breadth as well as length." — *Sir Richard Temple.* Elijah was praying on the seaward end of this ridge, bowed down upon the earth, his face between his knees. Seven times, as he prayed thus urgently, Elijah sent his servant (who was rather a disciple) to look out westward over the sea for signs of a storm. The prophet would not break off his praying to go himself. Six times the servant went and saw only the unclouded sky, but the

seventh time he saw, rising out of the sea, a cloud no larger than a man's hand. " Geographers and travelers often tell us of those great storms of wind and rain which are thus indicated in the Levant, so that, while all around their ship there is calm and sunshine, that little speck near the horizon is so sure a symptom of the coming gale that, as quickly as possible, the sails are furled and every preparation is made for the tempest that is at hand." — *Milligan.*

Elijah knew at once that his prayer was answered and that the long and terrible drought was over. " What remarkable faith he must have had, to infer a deluge from a cloud the size of a man's hand ! If it is God who has sent the something, then go on and infer the largest and the widest." — *Rev. John McNeill.* Elijah bade the king hasten down the mount and over the plain to his summer palace in Jezreel, and he himself, in his exultation, ran before Ahab the entire way. It was a distance of sixteen to eighteen miles, but Elijah was hardy, and, moreover, he was fired with a divine ecstasy. His God had given him one of the most notable victories over evil in all history.

MODERN EVILS : HOW TO FIGHT THEM. Elijah points out the one prevailing power. " We may find a modern reproduction of the test of Carmel in the impotence of all other schemes and methods of social and spiritual reformation and the power of the gospel. In it and its effects God answers by fire. Let the opposers, who are so glib in demonstrating the failure of Christianity, do the same with their enchantments, if they can." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Canon W. Hay Aitken enumerates our modern Baals which must be overthrown. They include Money, Rank, Fashion, Ambition, and Pleasure. We must choose between love of these and love of God.

If we would conquer evil we must have Elijah's courage, to speak up for Christ and Christianity. Senator Depew once nobly answered Julian Hawthorne at a meeting of the Nineteenth Century Club. " I know," he said, " what Christianity has done and what it is doing. I know what the Christian religion has been to this nation, and what civilization it produces when it is allowed a sway. A better society never has been and never will exist than that in New England, for its first one hundred and fifty years, when the whole life was dominated by the family Bible."

" We want men who will bring into politics the old spirit of belief in God and love of righteousness which Cromwell had ; men who will bring into literature the living faith which shall heal the Marah waters of our troubled thought such as Bunyan brought ; men who shall apply to commerce the Sermon on the Mount, and who shall bring into the Church the inspired audacity and divine aggressiveness of the first apostles." — *Rev. W. J. Dawson, D.D.*

Progress in all reforms depends on our individual activity, however insignificant we may be. " ' The great events of history,' says an acute French writer, ' like the mysterious personages in old romances, come through a door in the wall which no one had noticed.' We cannot tell what immense issues may depend on our public and our private duties." — *Dean Stanley.*

LESSON IV. — January 22.

ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND RETURN. — 1 Kings 19 : 1–21.

PRINT vs. 9–18.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***I waited patiently for Jehovah ;***
And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. — Ps. 40 : 1.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 42 : 6–11.
Reference Material : Ezek. 2 : 1–7 ; Acts 16 : 6–10 ; 18 : 1–11.
Primary Topic : GOD SENDS AN ANGEL TO HELP ELIJAH.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 19 : 2–8.
Memory Verse : Give us this day our daily bread. Matt. 6 : 11.
Junior Topic : GOD STRENGTHENS ELIJAH.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 19 : 1–21. Print vs. 9–18.
Memory Verses : Ps. 121 : 1, 2.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : JEHOVAH'S CHAMPION ENCOURAGED.
Topic for Young People and Adults : FINDING AND FINISHING OUR TASK.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Primary Classes study the one episode of Elijah under the juniper tree, the discouraged prophet and how God encouraged him. Ask the children to watch during the week and see what their discouragements are, and tell about them in the class. Then the teacher will tell how God is ready to help in each discouragement, as he helped Elijah.

The Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Classes will study the entire story. Get one pupil to read up on tornadoes and give the class an instance of their power and destructiveness. A second will do the same for earthquakes and a third for lightning. Any encyclopædia will give an abundance of facts. Get a fourth pupil to bring in examples of God's quiet working, as in sunshine, the growth of a tree, the formation of soil. Apply the lesson to the quiet voice of God in the human conscience. How are we answering the voice?

The Young People and Adults will make this lesson a discussion of their life-work. What is a Christian's life-work? How can he find it? What hindrances and discouragements will confront him as they confronted Elijah? How was Elijah taught to meet them and to finish his task? How are we to meet them? We have a fuller knowledge of God than Elijah had. The truths of the lesson may be applied by one pupil (by previous arrangement) to the political field; by others to the business field, the social field, the moral field, the religious field.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — According to Professor W. J. Beecher, about B.C. 909.

Place. — Some cave in the Sinai region, about 170 miles south of Beer-sheba and about 280 miles south of Mount Carmel.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Examples of Bible honesty in exposing the weakness of its heroes.
Characteristics of the desert south of Judah.
God's ways of encouraging his servants.
Earthquakes in the Bible.
Storms in the Bible.
The quiet workings of God's providence.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Three Voices of God.

I. THE VOICE OF COMFORT, vs. 1–8.
   Jezebel's threat.
   Elijah's flight.
   "Arise and eat."

II. THE VOICE OF PEACE, vs. 9–12.
   "What doest thou here?"
   Wind, earthquake, fire.
   The still small voice.

III. THE VOICE OF PROGRESS, vs. 13–21.
   "I, even I only."
   Hazael, Jehu, Elisha.
   Seven thousand faithful.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Books on Elijah already cited. Taylor's *Contrary Winds*. Horder's *The Silent Voice*. Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*. Payson's *Works, Vol. II*. Thompson's *Christian Manliness*. McKenzie's *Cambridge Sermons*. Robertson's *Sermons, Second Series*. Banks's *Heavenly Trade-Winds*. Peck's *Old Sins in New Clothes*. Dawson's *The Divine Challenge*. Liddon's *Sermons to the People*. Simcox's *The Cessation of Prophecy*. Poems: "Elijah on Mount Horeb," by Richard Wilton; "Elijah's Interview with God;" by Henry Francis Lyte; "Elijah in Horeb," in Keble's *Christian Year*. Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible*. Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*.

I. **THE VOICE OF COMFORT**, vs. 1–8. What must have been the feelings of Ahab's cruel queen Jezebel when she heard of the defeat and execution of all her priests? What fierce wrath filled her heart? Her first impulse would have been to kill Elijah; but crafty second thoughts showed her that this was out of the question. Elijah's influence with the people was at its height; to kill him would be to destroy herself, Ahab, and all her house. She must devise some other way of getting rid of him.

The worst that Jezebel could do was to send a threat to Elijah. Her messenger gave the prophet a day to leave the country, or he would be slain as Baal's priests had been slain. The sad thing is that Elijah was faithless and fearful enough to believe her.

Illustration. "When John Knox had his second interview with Mary Queen of Scotland, and spoke to her in a bold and fearless way, some Papists standing by said, 'He is no frightened.' Knox turned on them and answered, 'Why should the pleasing face of a gentlewoman frighten me? I have looked in the faces of many angry men, and yet have not been frightened above measure.' But Elijah, who also had con ronted many angry men, lost heart when he heard the threatenings of Jezebel." —*Revi G. H. Morrison, D.D.*

Illustration. "Surely he will preserve a dignified silence, or return an answer like that which Chrysostom sent on a similar occasion to the Empress Eudoxia, 'Go tell

her I fear nothing but sin.' But, instead of this, we are told (and surely the sacred historian heaved a deep sigh as he wrote the words), 'When he saw that, he arose, and went for his life.'" — *F. B. Meyer.* One of the strongest proofs of the honesty of the Bible record is the way in which it exhibits the weakness and sin of even its mightiest heroes.

Whither should Elijah flee? Jezebel would naturally look for him in Syria, where he had been hiding, and in Gilead, whence he had come originally; he turned therefore in a new direction, southward, walking and running fast for his life. He soon got out of Israel into Judah, but Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, was in close alliance with Ahab, and Elijah did not dare stay in the Southern Kingdom. Therefore he left behind him at Beer-sheba, the most southern city of Judah, his disciple-attendant who had followed him to that point (the Jews say that it was the son of the widow of Zarephath whom he had raised from the dead), and himself pressed on a day's journey into the wilderness. At last, for the first time in his flight, the prophet felt safe from Jezebel's vengeance.

The wilderness to which Elijah had come was so barren that a lonely retem ("juniper") bush was conspicuous in it — the retem being the largest shrub in the deserts south of Palestine. "Though the shade it affords is but scanty, in the absence of other shrubs it is frequently used by desert travelers as a refuge from the sun's scorching rays." — *E. W. G. Masterman.* Under this poor protection from the burning sun the weary prophet sat down to rest, and he was so discouraged that he prayed for death: "Take away my life, O God, for I am not better than my fathers."

Illustration. "A character as knightly as Lincoln knew the bleakest kind of days. Cowper went down from his Parnassus to touch the very bottoms of despair. Samuel Johnson, at the zenith of his brilliant career, made a pilgrimage to Uttoxeter to stand penitently, amid the pelting rain and stinging wind, on the spot where once in childhood he had disobeyed his father."—*George Clarke Peck.*

"We may have despondent hours, gloomy hours, faithless hours. Let us not hastily and impetuously desire death in them. God reserves better, braver, worthier hours for us. In them let us die — or, rather, in them let us be crowned." — *Rev. John Rhey Thompson, D.D.* If God had taken Elijah at his word, how much of noble living he would have missed, and translation in a chariot of fire at the end!

Illustration. Edinburgh Castle has been captured only once in its long history, and that was when the assault was made on the side where the rock is so steep that the defenders thought that no one could possibly climb up that way. So men fall because temptation assails them at some unguarded corner of their lives. In Elijah's case, it was because he had not set up the defence of a strong enough trust in God.

At length Elijah prayed himself into a troubled sleep, from which an angel awoke him with a touch. He had prayed for death, but the angel bade him live. It might have been the Angel of the Covenant, our Lord himself; for Elijah found awaiting him a meal, baked on the "coals," like the meal which Christ prepared after his resurrection for the weary fishers on the Sea of Galilee. There were hot stones, and on them lay a flat cake such as is used for bread in Palestine, done to a turn, while near it was a pitcher of cool water, a most tempting sight. "God treats Elijah just as a mother treats her child who is peevish because utterly tired out." — *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.*

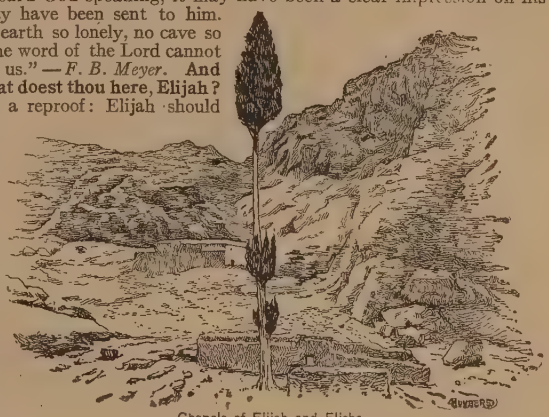
"Arise and eat." The angel summoned Elijah to the feast much as Christ called his disciples, and the half-starved prophet needed no second invitation. No sooner had he eaten then he fell asleep again, so tired was he. A second time the kindly angel aroused him, for another meal, in the strength of which Elijah kept on southward across the desert for forty days, traveling more leisurely the 170 miles between Beer-sheba and Mount Sinai because he was no longer in peril of his life. It is not said that he fasted the whole way, "but the most that he could expect would be a little milk from some Bedouin encampment, or a handful of dates from an oasis, or a little wild honey." — *Cambridge Bible.*

II. **THE VOICE OF PEACE**, vs. 9–12. Elijah had at last reached "Horeb the mount of God." Horeb is another name for Sinai, the wild mountainous region where Moses talked with Jehovah and where the Law was given. Tradition points to *Jebel Musa* ("the Mount of Moses") in the south of the peninsula of Sinai, between the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Akabah, the arms of the Red Sea, as the scene where that great event took place. Here "Elijah is made to realize the presence of God in a spectacle and an experience which for grandeur and depth of conception could hardly be surpassed in literature." — *Professor Skinner.*

9. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

10. And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

9. **And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there.** "Possibly the very 'cleft of the rock' in which Moses was hid when God showed him his glory." — *Principal David Rowlands.* **And, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him.** He may have actually heard God speaking, it may have been a clear impression on his mind, or a vision may have been sent to him. "There is no spot on earth so lonely, no cave so deep and dark, that the word of the Lord cannot discover and come to us." — *F. B. Meyer.* **And he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?** The question implies a reproof: Elijah should have been at work for God where work so greatly needed to be done. "Be up and doing — fill up every hour, leaving no crevice for a remorse or a repentance to creep through afterwards." — *F. W. Robertson.*



Chapels of Elijah and Elisha.
Said to be built over the cave.

10. **And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah.** We would say "zealous"; he had indeed been jealous for God's honor. **The God of hosts.** Elijah must have used these words without thinking of their great meaning: if Jehovah was God of hosts, Lord of all the armies on earth and the vast multitude of heavenly powers, why need his prophet tremble before Jezebel and Ahab? **For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant.** This was the solemn covenant into which God had entered with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that if they and their descendants would serve him, he would be their God, defending them from all evil and blessing them with all good. This covenant the entire nation under Joshua had ratified when they took possession of Canaan. **Thrown down thine altars.** Elijah had himself restored one of them on Mount Carmel. **And slain thy prophets with the sword.** For the moment Elijah forgot the power which he had just received from God, whereby he had slain four hundred and fifty Baal prophets with the sword. **And I, even I only, am left.** Elijah had been isolated and in hiding; he may not even have known of the hundred prophets of Jehovah whom Obadiah was feeding in a cave; or perhaps, if he knew of them, he thought they were cowards and no prophets. "What a chance he had, the only man in Israel who loved God, and whom God approved! What an opportunity for usefulness!" — *Alexander McKenzie.* **And they seek my life, to take it away.** Thus Elijah gave his answer to God's question, "an answer sufficient to justify himself before men, though not before God." — *Rev. William Henry Simcox.*

11. **And he said, Go forth.** No clear view of God's providence is to be obtained from hiding, in a cave or anywhere else. **And stand upon the mount before Jehovah.** A plain intimation that God was about to reveal himself clearly to his prophet. **And, behold, Jehovah passed by.** God is everywhere, he is always "passing by"; but what follows is more than the usual workings of God in his natural world. **And a great and strong wind rent the mountains.** Dr. W. J. Dawson finds in the wind a

11. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake:

12. And after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

---

symbol of liberty; but "liberty without God, what cure is there in that for the soul of man?" **And brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah.** Fierce winds are common in the Sinai region. The approach to Sinai from the west is called "the Pass of the Winds."

"Before that black tornado's stream the rent rocks whirl and crash,
Till splintered granite flies like boughs when lightning rends the ash!"
— *George Lansing Taylor.*

But Jehovah was not in the wind. "God's works continually pass before men, and in one sense he is in all his works. He shines upon us in the sun, he breathes upon us in the air, he supports us in the earth. But he is not in these things in such a sense that men find him there." — *Edward Payson.* **And after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake.** Dr. Dawson regards the earthquake as the symbol of "that violence of action, that whirl of things, which always attracts the lonely man and promises to cure his grief. Such a life might fill the heart with noise, never with peace."

12. **And after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire.** Compare all this with the phenomena that accompanied the giving of the law to Moses in this same place. "The storm followed, and the live lightning leapt from crag to crag, and the whole body of the heavens became a mass of flame and splendor. It was the spectacle of the greatness and grandness of nature." — *Rev. W. J. Dawson, D.D.* But nature alone never meets the need of man; we must have the God of nature. **And after the fire a still small voice.** "Literally, 'a sound of thin silence.'" — *New Century Bible.* R. V. margin, "a sound of gentle stillness." "This is, perhaps, the most forcible example of moral and spiritual teaching in a dramatic form in the whole range of Holy Scripture. Elijah fancied that one great stroke on Carmel would convert and regenerate the nation. Neither national nor individual regeneration is thus effected." — *W. Garrett Horder.* God will work in storm and earthquake, if we force him to, but he would far rather deal with us gently and lovingly.

"Come not in flashing storm,
Or bursting frown of thunder;
Come in the viewless form
Of wakening love and wonder; —
O duty grown divine,
The restless spirit still;
O sorrows taught to shine
As shadows of thy will." — *James Martineau.*

Illustration. "Not John the Baptist, but Jesus, is the regenerator of men; and though John must go before Jesus, yet to expect that he shall succeed in reforming the world is as absurd as to suppose that the plowshare and the harrow will produce a harvest without the genial heat of the sun and the kindly rain of the clouds." — *William M. Taylor.*

Illustration. The first Moravian missionaries to Greenland made the mistake of beginning their work with teaching about the nature of God, the evidences of Christianity, heaven and hell, and reaped no fruit of saved souls. But some of the natives chanced to hear one of the missionaries reading the account of Christ's sufferings and death. "What is that?" they cried. "Read it again." And this was the beginning of the conversion of multitudes.

"Speak, gracious Lord, speak ever thus;
And let thy terrors prove
The harbingers of peace to us,
The heralds of thy love!
Shine through the earthquake, fire, and storm,
Shine in thy milder, better form,
And all our fears remove!" — *Henry Francis Lyte.*

"Thou, whose pure eye like lightning might consume him,
On man with pity look'st;
Thou who to fire, storm, earthquake, well might'st doom him,
With still small voice rebuk'st." — *Lord Kinloch.*

13. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

14. And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15. And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hăz'-ă-ĕl to be king over Syria;

Illustration. "The quietest room in a Lancashire cotton mill is the engine-room. It is significantly called 'the power-room' of the mill. But from that quietest room emerges all the force which speeds the busy looms in their process of production. Let the engine be neglected, let countless looms be added without proportional increase of power, and the mill breaks down. We have been neglecting our power-room; we have been adding to the strain without multiplying the force, and the effects are seen in weariness, joylessness, and ineffectiveness. We must not work less, but we must pray more." — *Charles A. Berry.*

"Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!" — *John G. Whittier.*

III. THE VOICE OF PROGRESS, vs. 13–21. "When God comforts a man, it is very often by giving him work. The calmness of God comes to the obedient child of God." — *Alexander McKenzie.* It was so with Elijah.

13. **And it was so, when Elijah heard it.** No one can help hearing the thunder, the rushing wind, the rending rocks, the awful voice of God in nature and in providence; but happy indeed is he who by God's grace is enabled to hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to his soul. **That he wrapped his face in his mantle.** He feared to look on the face of the Almighty; thus Moses hid his face when he stood before the burning bush (Ex. 3 : 6). It was believed that the sight of God would instantly kill one (Gen. 32 : 30; Ex. 33 : 20, etc.). **And went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave.** It is significant and beautiful that Elijah had not been drawn from his cave by the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but was at once attracted by the gentle voice. **And, behold, there came a voice unto him.** The continuance of the still, small voice, with its appeal to Elijah's conscience. **And said, What doest thou here, Elijah?** "The divine question is repeated (see verse 9) in order that the divine lesson may be repeated and impressed on the prophet. Compare our Lord's threefold question to St. Peter, 'Lovest thou me?' (John 21 : 15, 16, 17)." — *Cambridge Bible.*

14. **And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah**, etc. Elijah repeats his words of verse 10.

15. **And Jehovah said unto him, Go.** Elijah was never the same after this faithless flight. His great work was done, and God now sends him to appoint other workers to take up his task. Thus the life of many a strong man, such as Moses, Saul, and David, has been spoiled at its close by a single sin; though others, such as Peter and Paul, gloriously rose above their sins, and shone with ever-increasing brightness to the end of their lives.

"Go, to the world return, nor fear to cast
Thy bread upon the waters, sure at last
In joy to find it after many days.
The work be thine, the fruit thy children's part:
Choose to believe, not see; sight tempts the heart
From sober walking in true gospel ways." — *John Keble.*

Return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus. Or, as in the margin, "*by* the wilderness *to* Damascus." **And when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.** It was plain that the weak Ahab would continue to be Jezebel's tool, and that only strong measures would prevent the restoration of Baal worship from the disaster of Mount Carmel. To prevent this the first step was to weaken

16. And Jē′-hū the son of Nĭm′-shī shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shā′-phăt of Ā′-bĕl-mĕ-hō′-lăh shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

17. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hăz′-ā-ĕl shall Jē′-hū slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jē′-hū shall Elisha slay.

18. Yet will I leave *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Bā′-ăl, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

---

the power of Ahab's house by an attack from Syria. But Ben-hadad, king of Syria, was growing old, and his martial vigor had been lessened by defeat. Therefore his place was to be taken by the bold and aggressive Hazael.

16. **And Jehu the son of Nimshi.** After Ahab's throne had been weakened by the Syrian attack, the second step in God's plan for the destruction of Baal worship was that Ahab should be replaced by a new king, and Jehu was selected because he hated idolatry, and was, moreover, a courageous and decisive character. **Shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel.** This, of course, would be treason to Ahab, but Ahab did not deserve allegiance; the king had himself proved traitor to the true interests of his country. **And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah.** Abel-meholah was both a town and a district in the valley of the Jordan about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. **Shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.** Elisha was zealous for Jehovah, faithful and persevering, filled with the Holy Spirit, an ideal successor for Elijah, as Joshua was an ideal successor for Moses.

Illustration. If he had had a companion Elijah would probably not have been so depressed in the wilderness. "Up till this time, his solitariness had been the great blank of his life. He had been a Luther without his Melancthon, a Peter without his John, a Calvin without his Beza." — *William M. Taylor.*

17. **And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay.** During his reign Hazael, king of Syria, was a constant scourge of Israel. Jehu killed Jehoram, son of Ahab and his successor; he was the chief instrument in the death of Jezebel, and he brought about the death of all Ahab's descendants and relatives, near and far. Besides, he made a great slaughtering of the priests and worshippers of Baal. **And him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.** Elisha did not actually join in such slaughter as Jehu's, but he was equally determined in his opposition to idolatry.

18. **Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel.** "'Will I preserve as a remnant.' God knows all those 'that are his.'" — *Cambridge Bible.*

Illustration. "When a boy or girl comes out for Christ, or takes a stand for what is pure and good, they sometimes seem to be standing quite alone. But you may be sure that you are not alone. In the same school, perhaps in the same class, are others who are with you in the fight. You may not know them any more than Elijah did, but God will show you your comrades in good time." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.* And, all the time, your Father is with you.

All the knees which have not bowed unto Baal. The seven thousand is not intended to be an exact number, but a round number, a symbolical number, seven being the number of perfection, and the thousands implying a multitude. **And every mouth which hath not kissed him.** Very commonly the heathen kiss their idols as an act of worship, and portions of the images are often completely worn away by these myriads of kisses. Many loathsome diseases are thus transmitted. Note that this is only negative praise of those seven thousand mouths; they should have been seven thousand mouths speaking for Jehovah. If they had spoken out bravely and faithfully, Elijah would not have fled before Jezebel, and the entire history of Israel would have been changed.

THE CONSECRATION OF ELISHA. The narrative next describes Elijah's prompt obedience in the matter of Elisha, the last of the three commands of Jehovah. As Cincinnatus was called from the plough to be the leader of the Romans, and Israel Putnam to be a leader in the American Revolution, so Elisha was found ploughing when Elijah reached Abel-meholah. He was evidently a wealthy farmer, for he had twelve yoke of oxen. Eleven servants were guiding the yokes ahead of him, and he was following with the twelfth. "I have seen more than a dozen plows thus at work in Palestine. The arable land of nearly all villages is cultivated in common, and

Arab farmers delight to work together, partly for mutual protection, and partly from their love of gossip." — *Thomson, "The Land and the Book."*

Elijah solemnly approached the young farmer and threw over his shoulders his own mantle, in token that Elisha was to be endowed with the prophetic gift, and was to follow him in his work as religious leader of the people. "The garment of skin covered with the hair seems then, as in later times (Zech. 13 : 4 ; Matt. 3 : 4), to have been the distinctive garb of the prophet." — *New Century Bible.*

Elijah Casting His Mantle on Elisha.

Having done this, Elijah moved slowly away ; but Elisha instantly grasped the meaning of the act, ran after Elijah, and said eagerly, "I will follow you ; only let me first kiss my father and mother good-by." Elijah gave permission, of course ; and Elisha, like Matthew (Luke 5 : 29), made a farewell feast for his neighbors and friends, killing the yoke of oxen with which he had been ploughing, and cooking them with the wooden plough and the heavy wooden yoke. With this complete symbol the young prophet signified that he was done with the old life, and had consecrated his all to God's service. Then he followed Elijah and became his attendant and disciple, as Joshua followed Moses, as Gehazi later followed Elisha, and as John Mark followed Paul and Barnabas. "Had Elisha refused to follow Elijah we know how vast would have been the difference to the Kingdom of Israel, to the Kingdom of Judah, to the Kingdom of Syria, to the Kingdom of God in each, to himself above all." — *Canon Liddon.* Such a call from Christ comes to each one of us. It makes an infinite difference whether we obey or refuse.

Why did not Elijah obey God's commands with reference to anointing Jehu and Hazael ? Some have thought that these acts required more courage than Elijah possessed, but that is very unlikely. "Strangely enough a fresh sin, the murder of Naboth, brought Ahab to repentance, such as he had not shown before. In consequence of this repentance God told Elijah that the judgment on the house of Ahab was to be postponed (1 Kings 21 : 27–29). So the judgment slept, and it was not till twelve or fourteen years later, in the reign of Jehoram, that Hazael became king of Syria (2 Kings 8 : 7–15), and a prophet at Elisha's command anointed Jehu king of Israel (2 Kings 9 : 1–10)." — *Cambridge Bible.* Elijah and Elisha were obedient to God's commands as they came to them, and so were faithful instruments in the unfolding of his providence. That is all that God asked of them, and all he asks of us.

LESSON V. — January 29.

ELIJAH IN NABOTH'S VINEYARD. — 1 Kings 21 : 1–29.

PRINT vs. 7–10, 16–20.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Be sure your sin will find you out.* — NUM. 32 : 23.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 43 : 1–5.
Reference Material : Lev. 25 : 23–28 ; Amos 8 : 4–10 ; Mic. 3 : 1–4.
Primary Topic : THE SIN OF SELFISHNESS.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 21 : 1–10, 17, 18, 20. Print vs. 7–10, 17, 18, 20.
Memory Verse : Thou shalt not steal. Ex. 20 : 15.

Junior Topic : ELIJAH DENOUNCES A SELFISH KING.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 21 : 1–29. Print vs. 7–10, 16–20.
Memory Verse : Gal. 6 : 7.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : JEHOVAH'S CHAMPION FEARED.
Topic for Young People and Adults : RESPECTING THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Primary Classes will study Ahab's selfishness in seizing Naboth's vineyard in the unscrupulous and wicked way he allowed Jezebel to use. Note the verses selected by the Lesson Committee and avoid the tragedy — the stoning of Naboth and the prophecy of the bloody deaths of Ahab, Jezebel, and their family. Selfishness is a sin that enters in many ways the lives of children, so that there will be no lack of applications. Get the pupils to dictate to you some of the ways of showing selfishness to-day, ways quite as bad as Ahab's, and write them on the blackboard or on a large sheet of paper.

The Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Classes will also make this a lesson in selfishness, but studying all the event. Have one of the class (during the week) write out the lesson story in the character of one of Naboth's neighbors, a man of the common people, and read this account in the recitation. Have another do the same in the character of one of Jezebel's servants, a third in the character of Ahab, and a fourth in the character of Elijah himself.

The Young People and Adults will review the familiar story (bringing out unfamiliar points), and will apply its teachings to some very modern questions : the land question and its solution ; the greed of wealth and its cure ; the misuse of power ; how to keep the courts just ; free legal service for the poor ; modern reforms that call for Elijahs; the Jezebels of to-day ; the mob spirit and how it is aroused by designing men. Different members of the class (or speakers from outside the class) may be asked in advance to speak on these subjects.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — B.C. 906, according to Professor Beecher.

Place. — Jezreel, summer capital of King Ahab, about twenty miles north of his capital, Samaria. It is at the head of the valley of Jezreel, which falls eastward to the Jordan ; and its modern name is Zerin.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

British writers compare Jezreel with Windsor; why?
Compare Ahab and Jezebel with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Ægisthus and Clytemnestra.
Compare Ahab's repentance with Manasseh's and Peter's.
Lessons for to-day from Ahab's greed.
Illustrate Elijah's character by John Knox.
Other Bible examples of covetousness.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Respecting the Rights of Others.

I. AHAB'S SELFISH GREED, vs. 1–6.
- Covetous Ahab.
- Manly Naboth.
- Babyish Ahab.
- The folly of greed.

II. AHAB'S APPARENT TRIUMPH, vs. 7–16.
- Jezebel's will.
- Jezebel's craft.
- Ahab in possession.
- The cruelty of selfishness.

III. AHAB'S UTTER CONDEMNATION, vs. 17–29.
- Elijah's commission.
- Jehovah's judgment.
- Jehovah's mercy.
- Respecting the rights of others.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Morrison's *The Footsteps of the Flock*. *The Heritage of the Spirit*, by Bishop Mandell of Peterborough. Foakes-Jackson's *The Biblical History of the Hebrews*. Chapters on Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel in Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*. Kingsley's *Sermons for the Times*. Brand's *Sermons from a College Pulpit*. Talmage's *Woman: Her Power and Privileges*. Dr. George Lansing Taylor pictures the scene vividly in his long poem, *Elijah the Reformer*. "On Ahab," in Quarles's *Divine Fancies*.

I. **AHAB'S SELFISH GREED**, vs. 1–6. Ahab, king of the ten Northern tribes (Israel), was a man of personal bravery in battle, but weak at home. He was completely under the thumb of his heathen queen Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre. In the presence of Elijah he was awed into submission by that great man's power of character, even to the extent of making no protest when four hundred and fifty of Jezebel's Baalite priests were slain at Mount Carmel ; but as soon as he was alone again with Jezebel he became her slave as before.

Like other weak men, not getting his way in great affairs, Ahab was all the more insistent upon his whim in small matters. Adjoining the grounds of his summer

7. And Jĕz'-ĕ-bĕl his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Nā'-bŏth the Jĕz'-rē-ĕl-īte.

palace in Jezreel, north of Samaria, his capital, was a vineyard which the king wanted to round out his land. He planned to transform it into an herb garden; and he offered to buy it from Naboth, its owner, or, if he preferred, to give him a better vineyard for it.

Thus far Ahab was quite within his rights. He had not, however, counted upon the reluctance of all Jews to part with their inheritance of land. This was a religious feeling, enforced and illustrated by the Bible; see the incident of the daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 36 : 6, 7), and the law regarding the return of all sold lands in the year of jubilee, every fiftieth year (Lev. 25 : 23–28). Moreover, land must be sold to a kinsman if sold at all (Jer. 32 : 7–10). So Naboth stood firmly on his rights, and with an expression of horror refused to sell his vineyard to the king.

"Doubtless, resting in his vineyard, Naboth had had glimpses of strange sights in the king's palace. He had seen with his own eyes what idolatry led to, whenever the queen was at home in her palace at Jezreel. And Naboth felt that his little plot of ground, so rich in prayer and fellowship with God, so sanctified with sweet and holy memories, would be tainted and befouled and cursed forever if it came into the hands of Jezebel." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

"Like all peoples worthy of freedom, the Israelites were intensely attached to their ancestral estates. Any attempt to seize an estate by violence was certain to be fiercely resented, especially as the land was considered to belong to Jehovah, and to be held by its owner as a gift from him." — *F. J. Foakes-Jackson.*

Then Ahab began to act the baby. He sulked like a spoiled child. Throwing himself pettishly on his bed, he turned his face to the wall and refused to eat. Then Jezebel, who was well used to his childish fits, came and asked what was the matter. We can imagine her scornful laugh as the king told her.

THE FOLLY OF GREED. Greed makes us the slave of our disappointments. "It was said of Cromwell that the darker things became, the brighter and steadier grew his hope. If he toiled all night and caught nothing, he was sure to see the Master in the morning. But Ahab, baffled in one poor desire, lost heart and hope and showed himself a weakling." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

"There is many a sin of oppression, many a sin of covetousness, which no law of man can touch; but if man's law has flaws and gaps in it, through which covetousness can creep, God's has none." — *Charles Kingsley.*

Illustration. "Just as a pilgrim journeying along a road on which he has never been before thinks that each house he sees in the distance is the inn, and, finding that it is not, sets his hopes on the next, and so on with house after house, until at last he comes to the inn; in like manner the soul of man, as soon as she enters upon the new and untried pathway of this life, directs her eyes towards the goal of the Supreme Good, and whatever she sees with any appearance of good in it, thinks that is the object of her quest. Hence we see children first of all set their hearts on an apple; then, at a later stage, they want a bird; then, later, fine clothes; then a horse; then they want money, at first a little, then a great deal, and at last a gold-mine." — *Dante, Convivio, IV.* 12.

"The covetous person lives as if the world were made altogether for him, and not he for the world; to take in everything, and to part with nothing." — *Robert South.*

Covetousness, on one side or the other, is at the base of all labor troubles, most of the difficulties of trade and commerce, and most wars. It is acute selfishness, one of the commonest and most deadly forms of sin. Well is it made the climax of the Ten Commandments. Well did Christ say, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness" (Luke 12 : 15).

II. **AHAB'S APPARENT TRIUMPH**, vs. 7–16. 7. **And Jezebel his wife said unto him.** "A stronger than Ahab was not far off to solve the difficulty." — *Milligan.* Jezebel had proved herself stronger than Ahab by threatening Elijah with vengeance after the slaying of the priests of Baal at Mount Carmel, while Ahab had tamely acquiesced though doubtless he was as displeased as Jezebel. **Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?** "Are you not the king?" Jezebel implied. "Can you not command? Can you not seize?" Really she knew that she and not her weak husband ruled the realm, and that not even she dared to take Naboth's vine-

8. So she wrote letters in Ā′-hăb's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, *and* that dwelt with Nā′-bŏth.

9. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Nā′-bŏth on high among the people:

10. And set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him to death.

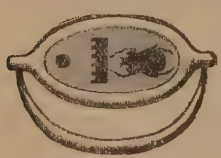
---

yard without at least a pretext. **Arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry.** In these words "there seems the same half-contemptuous recognition of a self-indulgent weakness of nature which may be traced in Elijah's words in 1 Kings 18 : 41, 'Get thee up, eat and drink ; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.' Ahab is fit only to desire and to revel ; it is for bolder spirits to act for good or for evil." — *Ellicott.* **I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.** Probably by this time Ahab knew that Jezebel would do what she said she would, especially if it was a piece of wickedness ; so he came out of his sulks and asked her how she was going about it. "That's my secret," Jezebel probably answered ; "leave it to me."

Illustration. Thus Lady Macbeth cried to her weak-spirited husband, "Infirm of purpose ! Give me the daggers." Thus it was Clytemnestra and not Ægisthus that murdered King Agamemnon.

A WIFE'S INFLUENCE. "No one can so inspire a man to noble purposes as a noble woman, and no one so thoroughly degrade a man as a wife of unworthy tendencies. All that was worth admiration in the character of Henry VI. was a reflection of the heroics of his wife Margaret. William, Prince of Orange, was restored to the right path by the grand qualities of his wife Mary. Justinian, the Roman emperor, confessed that his wise laws were the suggestion of his wife Theodora. Andrew Jackson, the warrior and President, had his mightiest reënforcement in his plain wife, whose inartistic attire was the amusement of the elegant circles in which she was invited. Washington, who broke the chain that held America in foreign vassalage, wore for forty years a chain around his own neck, the chain holding the miniature likeness of her who had been his greatest inspiration, whether among the snows at Valley Forge or the honors of the Presidential chair." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

8. **So she wrote letters in Ahab's name.** That is, purporting to come from him. **And sealed them with his seal.** The seal is a very ancient contrivance, going back in Egypt more than four thousand years. It largely took the place of a signature in the days when few could write. Clay was usually the material on which the seal was stamped, the lump being attached to the document to be authenticated. **And sent the letters unto the elders.** The heads of families, leading men. **And to the nobles that were in his city.** In Jezreel, Jezebel writing from Samaria. **And that dwelt with Naboth.** That is, his fellow citizens.



Seal Ring with the Scarabæus.

9. **And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast.** "Fasting is everywhere in the Old Testament a sign of humiliation before God. The idea here seems to be that the community lies under the anger of the Deity on account of a grave crime committed by one of its members, which is to be exposed and punished." — *New Century Bible.* The fast also involved a cessation of work, a holiday, so that the citizens would have time to attend the public gathering. **And set Naboth on high among the people.** Not in the seat of honor, but in the seat of the accused, where all can see him and observe his bearing under the charge.

10. **And set two men, base fellows, before him.** The law required two witnesses, at least, in all cases where the punishment was death (Deut. 17 : 6 ; 19 : 15 ; Matt. 26 : 60). The witnesses required by Jezebel were men of no character, who would take bribes, and swear to any lie. We are reminded of the two false witnesses set up by the Jews to convict Jesus — and on the same charges as those brought against Naboth. **And let them bear witness against him.** "Naboth was not put out of the way by private assassination ; he was slain by a judicial murder." — *Bishop of Peterborough.* **Saying, thou didst curse God and the king.** "Curse" is literally "bless," say "good-by" to, that is, renounce or disown. Compare Job 1 : 5 (and

16. And it came to pass, when Ā'-hăb heard that Nā'-bŏth was dead, that Ā'-hăb rose up to go down to the vineyard of Nā'-bŏth the Jĕz'-rē-ĕl-īte to take possession of it.

margin). See illustrations in Ex. 22 : 28 ; Lev. 24 : 10–23 ; Acts 6 : 11. **And then carry him out.** A criminal was not to be executed within a city, as that would defile it. Thus Christ was crucified outside Jerusalem. **And stone him to death.** Jezebel took it for granted that Naboth would be condemned.

THE PLOT IS CARRIED OUT. The evil queen found ready tools in the rulers of Jezreel, as she knew she would. Doubtless she had tested their character before in her slaughter of the prophets of Jehovah, 1 Kings 18 : 4. The programme, which may have been a familiar one in those wicked days, was carried out exactly as planned. The charge was made, a double charge of treason and of blasphemy, and it was "substantiated" by the false witnesses. With a great show of zeal for God and the king a band of hired ruffians seized the ill-fated Naboth, carried him out of the city, and, using the cruel, old punishment for his alleged crime, stoned him to death. In order that his heirs might not lay claim to the inheritance, his sons also were slain (2 Kings 9 : 26). "Even had this not been so, the property of executed traitors would naturally fall to the king, although no enactment to this effect is found in the Law." — *Ellicott.*

"Naboth fell, not by the king's hand, but by the condemnation of his fellow-citizens. Indeed, most people must have sincerely felt that the old-fashioned conservatism of Naboth was sorely out of place in a progressive state of society ; and we cannot doubt that Naboth's austerity had made him an extremely unpopular character." — *Bishop of Peterborough.*

"How Ahab longs! Ahab must be possest
Of Naboth's Vineyard, or can find no rest.
Ahab grows sullen; he can eat no Bread:
His Body prostrates on his restless Bed.
Ahab's desire must not be withstood,
It must be purchas'd, though with Naboth's Blood.
Unlawful Pleasures, when they jostle further
Than ordinary bounds, oft end in murther.
Me thinks, the Grapes that cluster from that Vine,
Should (being prest) afford more blood than wine."

— *Francis Quarles, 1592–1644.*

16. **When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead.** Note that Ahab did not ask how Naboth came to die ; he did not want to know ! Enough for him that his undesirable neighbor was out of the way. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, inserts here the interesting statement that Ahab rent his clothes at the news and put on sackcloth, as if he could salve his conscience in that cheap way. It would be much like him to do this, but the information is probably mistakenly repeated from verse 27. **Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.** "Ahab went to Naboth's vineyard with a comfortable feeling that things had settled themselves in a very satisfactory way. He had got what he wanted, and every one had helped him to get it." — *Bishop of Peterborough.* **To take possession of it.** "The dark deed had been done at night, the king was alert with the morning light. He rode in his chariot from Samaria to Jezreel, which is but seven miles distant, and he rode in something of military state, for in separate chariots, or else riding in the same chariot, behind him were two warlike youths, Jehu and Bidkar, who were destined to remember the events of the day, and to refer to them four years afterwards, when one had become king and the other his chief commander. But Ahab's joy was short-lived." — *Hastings.*

THE CRUELTY OF SELFISHNESS. "Oh, my friends, whenever we are tempted to be selfish and grasping, be sure that we are opening a door to the very devil of hell himself, though he may look so smooth, and gentle, and respectable that perhaps we shall not know him when he comes to us, and shall take his counsels for the counsel of an angel of light. But be sure that if it is selfishness which has opened the door of our heart, not God but the devil will come in, let him disguise himself as cunningly as he will ; and our only hope is to flee to Him in whom there was no selfishness, the Lord Jesus Christ who came not to do his own will, but his Father's ; not to glorify himself, but his Father ; not to save his own life, but to sacrifice it freely for us, his selfish, weak, greedy, wandering sheep. Pray to him to give you his Spirit." — *Charles Kingsley.*

17. And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tĭsh′-bīte, saying,

18. Arise, go down to meet Ā′-hăb king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Nā′-bŏth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it.

19. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Nā′-bŏth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

20. And Ā′-hăb said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah.

III. **AHAB'S UTTER CONDEMNATION**, vs. 17–29. Elijah "came back," as the present saying is. He seems to have been laid aside from active service for a time — perhaps after he ran away from Jezebel he laid himself aside. But we see him regaining all his strength and courage, and showing himself a lion as on Mount Carmel. The following event is an inspiring lesson to all that have been laid aside from Christian work, by sickness or failure or for any other cause. It is never too late to "come back."

17. **And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite.** Elijah does not appear in chapter 20, which is devoted to an account of Israel's successful struggle with Ben-hadad, king of Syria. Two unknown prophets of Jehovah appear in that chapter, showing that the true religion was again recognized by the king, but Elijah was in retirement. He was sent forth to rebuke this wrong done to an obscure man of the people, though he had taken no part in the great events of war and politics that had recently transpired. This is a marked example of the Bible's lofty and prophetic viewpoint, so different from the thought of the day in which it was written, and still far higher than the average thinking of mankind on such matters.

18. **Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel.** Elijah may have been in some mountain district, whence it would be "down" to Jezreel. **Who dwelleth in Samaria.** This seemingly obvious fact is here stated to bring out clearly the guilt of Ahab, whose own inheritance of land was in Samaria, but he was so greedy that he was seizing Naboth's inheritance in Jezreel. **Behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth.** Therefore we are to think of Elijah as striding angrily into the presence of Ahab, and not as waiting for him in the vineyard.

19. **Thus saith Jehovah.** Elijah was not to use his own words, but God's, in condemning Ahab, an example we need to bear in mind. **Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?** Hast thou added the sin of theft to that of murder? For certainly Ahab was not the heir of Naboth. "Elijah put two counts into the indictment; killing was one sin, taking possession was another. A man's possessions (if they be justly come by) belong to him, in the sight of God as well as in the sight of man, and God will uphold and avenge the man's right." — *Charles Kingsley.* **In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth.** Just outside Jezreel, and perhaps in Naboth's own vineyard where Ahab's son was afterwards cast to be eaten by dogs. **Shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.** "This judgment was accomplished not on Ahab himself, but on Ahab through his son Joram (2 Kings 9 : 26). But the Hebrews believed that a man lived on in his descendants, so that what they suffered was considered to be a part of his punishment. Compare Ex. 20 : 5, 6." — *Cambridge Bible.* Also it is recorded in 1 Kings 22 : 38 how Ahab's blood also was licked up by dogs.

20. **And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?** "Note how we mistake our enemies. He thought Elijah was his worst of foes, and had he known it, he was his best of friends." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.* "When a man fancies that God's prophet is his enemy, and dreams that his finding him out is a calamity and a loss, that man may be certain that something else will find him out some day. His sins will find him out, and that is worse than the prophet's coming." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Illustration. "Sin distorts everything. It is like the grey dawn which so obscures the most familiar objects that men mistake friends for foes, and foes for friends; as in the old story, the frenzied king of Wales slew the faithful hound that had saved his child from death, thinking that the dog had attacked the child." — *F. B. Meyer.*

Illustration. "There was a sense in which Ahab was correct in calling the prophet his 'enemy,' because he was the prophet's enemy. There could be no compromise; one of them must yield. A certain writer represents a man engaged in a wicked business as scolding, and swearing at, and beating his Christian wife because she persisted in praying for him. He protested that she must stop praying for him or he must stop his business; both could not go on together; one must give way. It was doubtless true. I need not say that business was the liquor traffic." — *Rev. James Brand.*

And he answered, I have found thee. "'I have indeed found thee,' Elijah answers, 'found thee when thou wouldest fain not have been found.'" — *Speaker's Commentary.* **Because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil.** The king had fixed his own price: he had sold himself for a vineyard! The reference is to the widespread custom in the ancient world whereby men sold themselves into slavery. **In the sight of Jehovah.** Ahab was God's representative, sitting on the throne to rule over God's people. His sin was thus made doubly heinous.

From an old print.

Elijah Denouncing the Crime of Ahab in Naboth's Vineyard.

JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT. Elijah did not name Ahab's sin — the king's conscience was naming it loudly enough. In a few stern words he repeated the condemnation which God had bidden him pronounce. The king's life was forfeit, and the lives of all that could succeed him on the throne, whatever their age. The destruction that had fallen on the preceding dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha would fall upon Ahab's. They were not even to have decent burial: those that died in the city should be eaten by the savage city dogs, and those that died in the country should be eaten by the birds of carrion. Queen Jezebel herself was not to be spared — how could she be, as she was the king's chief agent in this wickedness? — but the dogs were to eat her dead body out of a ditch by the wall of Jezreel. This was the terrible judgment which must have struck Ahab to the heart.

"Elijah did not foretell that the place of the destruction of Ahab's family would be on Naboth's land, but this is implied in 2 Kings 9 : 36." — *Peake's Commentary.*

"See what little things may ruin us. For it is not a kingdom that is in question here; it is only a little plot of garden ground, and yet it meant the downfall of a king. Let us learn, then, the power of little things. If a little vineyard played havoc with a dynasty, a little vice may make havoc with a life." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

Illustration. "When a man thinks to have done with his sin, he finds that his sin has not done with him; and what appeared like a great gain proves to be an infinite loss. There is a sad lesson in the story of two young men in California who in a great fire went into a chamber of their warerooms to get their books and papers, and closed the iron door after them to keep out the smoke and draught. Immediately they returned with their precious treasure in their hands, but the heat had swelled the iron door! It would not open. Their voices were heard, but help from without could not reach them. There are multitudes who are going into the chamber of their own chosen treasures and closing the door behind them, and the furnace heat of God's violated law is swelling the iron door, so that it will not open." — *Rev. James Brand.*

JEHOVAH'S MERCY. Ahab knew enough of Elijah by this time to be sure that he spoke the truth and had divine authority back of him. The great drought and its ending were enough to convince the king of that. What pity could not do, fear ac-

complished. Ahab was filled with horror. He seems to have become truly repentant. He tore his royal robes to express a torn heart. He wore sackcloth by day and slept in it by night, that his physical torments might show forth the torture of his soul. He walked forth humbly, with no retinue, some say barefoot. He gave every sign of repentance.

The Lord never turns away a repentant sinner, and he did not reject Ahab. He told Elijah (and Elijah doubtless told the king) that because Ahab had humbled himself before Jehovah, the punishment (which was inevitable) would not fall in his days, but would be executed in the days of his son and heir. This was the case as appears in the history of the reign of Jehoram. Elijah does not seem to have objected to this reversal of his prophecy, as Jonah objected when God showed mercy to Nineveh which Jonah had condemned.

"The episode of Naboth's vineyard produced a great change in popular sentiment. It revealed the true character of the issues in Elijah's conflict against idolatry. It showed the people that, while idolatry went hand in hand with injustice and crime, the religion of Jehovah was the bulwark of righteousness and liberty. At the same time, it opened their eyes to the real grandeur of the prophet in their midst, and doubtless we are to date from this event a great increase in his power as the prophet of Jehovah." — *Hastings.*

RESPECTING THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS. "The politician says with a sigh, 'A good deal of dirty work goes on, and I am afraid that sometimes I get the advantage of it.' He turns his back and shuts his eyes, lest he should see anything that might shock him." — *Bishop of Peterborough.* Men are often like Ahab, doing nothing themselves to get gains wickedly, but accepting them when others get them wickedly. We are responsible for every infraction of the rights of others that we might prevent, and not merely for those that we commit.

"God will surely lay the burden on the man who helped to make the burden; God will surely require part payment from the man who profited by the bargain; so keep yourselves clear from other men's sins, that you may be clear also of their condemnation." — *Charles Kingsley.*

"On the line of the same principle, if an employer of labor, by paying an inadequate and unjust wage, tempts his employees to supplement their scanty pittance by dishonest or unholy methods, he is held responsible, in the sight of Heaven, for the evil which he might have prevented if he had not been wilfully and criminally indifferent." — *F. B. Meyer.*

"No one is worthy of the best the world can afford who has not schooled himself to do without it when it cannot be obtained except at the price of dishonor." — *G. W. Cooke.*

"In honor preferring one another" (Rom. 12 : 10) might well be taken as the motto of this lesson. No life is happy that does not live in the happiness of others and find far more pleasure in Naboth's enjoyment of his vineyard than in any unjust possession of his own.

LESSON VI. — February 5.

ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN. — 2 Kings 2 : 1–18.

PRINT vs. 5–11.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.*** — REV. 2 : 10.

Devotional Reading : 1 Thess. 4 : 13–18.
Reference Material : Mark 9 : 2–8; 2 Tim. 4 : 1–8.
Primary Topic : GOD TAKES ELIJAH TO HEAVEN.
Lesson Material : 1 Kings 21 : 1–29. Print vs. 5–11.
Memory Verse : In my Father's house are many mansions. **John 14 : 2**
Junior Topic : ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN.
Lesson Material : 2 Kings 2 : 1–15. Print vs. 5–11.
Memory Verse : Prov. 4 : 18.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : JEHOVAH'S CHAMPION EXALTED.
Topic for Young People and Adults : DIVINE APPROVAL OF FAITHFUL SERVICE.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

For the Younger Classes the teacher may draw a large outline map of the

journey taken by Elijah and Elisha, marking plainly Gilgal, Beth-el, Jericho, the Jordan, and the Gilead hills. Then write a set of questions on the lesson, each question on a separate slip of paper, the questions being numbered. Mount the map on a board and stick these questions on the map with pins, at each place the group of questions concerning that place. The pupils will remove the questions in order, read each, and answer it. For review jumble the questions, and have the pupils draw them at haphazard and answer them.

For the Older Classes this lesson involves a discussion of some very practical and important points: readiness for death; how to meet death; how to make sure of a happy death; the value of human friendship and how to increase it; training for religious work; providing successors for leaders; getting ready to take up the burdens that others will be obliged to lay down; the kind of life that is a support to a nation. These topics may be assigned to different members of the class, each to speak on his subject briefly or read a short essay on it.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The translation of Elijah occurred (Beecher) about B.C. 900.

Place. — The course of Elijah's last journey was southeastward, from Gilgal to Beth-el, thence to Jericho, and across the Jordan into the southern hills of Gilead, — about thirty-five miles.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Sons of the prophets: origin, growth, purpose.
Gilgals of Palestine.
Great events at Beth-el and Jericho.
Miracles of crossing water, in the Old Testament and the New Testament.
Elijah and Elisha contrasted.
Elijah's translation compared with Christ's ascension.
A summary of Elijah's life and character.
Elijah compared with John the Baptist.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: God Honors Elijah's Life of Courage and Fidelity.

I. ELISHA'S CONSTANCY, vs. 1–4.
   The journey to Jericho.
   "I will not leave thee."
   Faithful following.

II. THE CHARIOT OF FIRE, vs. 5–11
   Elisha's prayer.
   A great end of a great life.
   How God rewards faithfulness.

III. THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH, vs. 12–18.
   Grief for Elijah.
   The spirit of Elijah.
   Keeping up the succession.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Stanley's *Addresses and Sermons*. Cross's *Knight Banneret*. Whiton's *New Points to Old Texts*. Bishop Mandell's *The Heritage of the Spirit*. Hasell's *Bible Partings*. Trench's *Sermons New and Old*. Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*. Raymond's *Suggestions for the Spiritual Life*. Knox Little's *Manchester Sermons*. Simcox's *The Cessation of Prophecy* (two sermons). McNeill's *Sermons*, Vol. II. Reference in Dante's *Inferno*, XXVI., 35–41; also a reference in Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, Part I. Newton's *Olney Hymns*.

I. ELISHA'S CONSTANCY, vs. 1–4. Elijah's renewed courage and power, shown in his bold rebuke of Ahab for the murder of Naboth, flamed forth again in his rebuke of Ahab's successor, Ahaziah. The king in his sickness sent messengers to Baalzebub at Ekron in Philistia, and asked that "god of flies" whether he was to recover. Elijah met the messengers and sent them back to the king with the word that because of this act of heathenism he should surely die. In hot anger Ahaziah sent a captain with a band of fifty to seize Elijah, but the prophet called down upon them fire from heaven, which consumed them. This happened also to a second band despatched by the king; but the captain of the third band begged for mercy from Elijah. The prophet went with the captain to the king, and repeated his stern prophecy face to face. Ahaziah had no son, so he was succeeded by his brother Jehoram.

The knowledge that he was near the end of his earthly career seems to have come to Elijah when he was at Gilgal, where there was a school of the prophets. "The prophets from the earliest times lived in societies (1 Sam. 10 : 5), and as members of such societies were called 'sons of the prophets.' They were numerous, and were to be found at Gilgal, Beth-el, Jericho, and probably other places." — *Cambridge Bible.* "These 'sons of the prophets' had fixed settlements, and were supported in part by charitable gifts of the laity. It is only in a very loose sense that such communities can be spoken of as 'schools'; and the traditional idea that they were theological seminaries for the training of candidates for the prophetic office is altogether misleading." — *Professor Skinner.* These schools of the prophets, founded by Samuel and fostered by David, seem to have been neglected during the nation's defection to idolatry. It is no small part of the credit due Elijah that he joined to the more conspicuous and militant work of a prophet the quiet and fruitful care of these institutions, which were educational in their aim and result, however widely they differed from the educational institutions of our own day.

Gilgal.

"Gilgal" means "a sacred circle of stones," as at Stonehenge. Palestine has a number of such circles, the remains of very ancient religious sanctuaries, and it also had several Gilgals. One of these is about seven miles north of Beth-el, and may be the Gilgal here meant. It seems likely that it was the home of Elisha, and that Elijah sought him there from his own place of retirement, whatever it was.

Illustrations. As his time to leave the world drew near, Elijah made no change in his life, but calmly went his accustomed round. "That was a wise and true reply of Wesley to the inquiry, 'What would you do if you knew that you would have to die within three days?' 'I should do just the work which I have already planned to do : ministering in one place ; meeting my preachers in another ; lodging in yet another, till the moment came that I was called to yield my spirit back to Him who gave it." — *F. B. Meyer.*

More than a century ago, a total eclipse of the sun terrified the people of Connecticut. The House of Representatives adjourned, but when this was proposed in the Council, Colonel Davenport objected : "If this is the day of judgment, I choose to be found doing my duty. I move that candles be brought."

Elijah wished to say farewell to Elisha and leave him at Gilgal ; but the younger man, with some dim understanding that it was the last time he would see his beloved leader and teacher, insisted on accompanying him southeastward to Beth-el, where was another school of the prophets, and where the two rested. These young prophets had the same mysterious anticipation as Elisha, so that when Elijah again urged him to go no further, Elisha's determination to accompany Elijah was strengthened, and he went on with him southeastward to Jericho, where was another school of the prophets, and where the same thing happened. It is one of the most beautiful Bible examples of faithful following.

FAITHFUL FOLLOWING. The following of Godlike men is one of the truest aids toward the following of God. We are fortunate indeed in having noble parents, teachers, pastor, friends, and other leaders whom we know through books, both leaders of the present and those of the past. If we follow them as faithfully as Elisha followed Elijah, we learn from their lives, we are guided by their counsel, we breathe in their spirit. We come thus to be many men in one, adding the most real parts of these other lives to our own.

II. **THE CHARIOT OF FIRE**, vs. 5–11. 5. The school of the prophets at Jericho had the same feeling as those of Beth-el and of Gilgal, that they were looking their last on Elijah ; and they also asked Elisha — for they dared not approach

5. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

6. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off: and they two stood by the Jordan.

Elijah on the subject — whether he knew what was to happen. **And he answered, Yea, I know it.** All these men lived in close communion with God, and so were keenly sensitive to God's designs.

Illustration. "At the time of the great earthquakes in Japan, a scientist in the Isle of Wight was watching, in his observatory, the delicate instruments that record earth-tremors. He became conscious of the earthquakes within a minute of the time of their occurrence, though the breadth of the world lay between the earthquakes and his instrument. Now the soul is far more delicate than any instrument. Who can doubt that, if it be watched and cleansed, it will detect the whisperings of heaven?" — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

Hold ye your peace. Speech is not for the greatest moments. Elisha felt instinctively that a reverent and loving silence was the best tribute to pay their leader and teacher on his departure. If we have praise and tender words for our dear ones, let us speak them now, while they are with us in the full tide of life.

6. **And Elijah said unto him.** Testing his fidelity the third time. **Tarry here, I pray thee.** "Here is the humility of true greatness! He foresaw that he was to enjoy an exodus to which, in the whole history of the race, there had been but one parallel. Yet he was so reticent about it that, if he had had his way, no mortal eye would have beheld it. Any one less great would have let the secret out, or have contrived to line the heights of the Jordan with expectant crowds of witnesses. But, instead of this, he kept the secret well locked up within him, and tried to dissuade Elisha from accompanying him a single step. Perhaps that loyal heart feared attracting to himself, either then or afterwards, honor due only to God." — *F. B. Meyer.* Perhaps also he wished to test the faith, devotion, and perseverance of Elisha. Dr. Morrison thinks that Elijah anticipated the appearance of Jehovah in awful splendor that might crush Elisha or make him insane. **For Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan.** Note how real and vivid and familiar the Lord was to Elijah. How simply he speaks of the momentous journey, as if he were going on an errand for a friend! This intimate companionship with God is not reserved for the Elijahs, but may and should belong to every one of us. **And he said, as Jehovah liveth.** God was as real to Elisha as Elijah — the living God, as much alive as the aged friend by whose side he was walking. **And as thy soul liveth.** A common form of oath, but it must have struck deeply then into Elisha's heart. **I will not leave thee.** It required much strength of character to say No to such a man as Elijah and in such a moment. "The apparent disobedience is forgiven, nay, approved of; for it springs from the fountain of deep, long-tried, holy affection." — *E. J. Hasell.* "A Prophet Teacher greater than Elijah — be sure of it — is ours. His sweet considerateness is so Godlike, he never asks us to pause, but offers strength to journey on. Keep near him — we reach the river — he can take us through." — *Canon W. J. Knox Little.* **And they two went on.** Three times this brief account repeats the significant words, "they two." Thus it emphasizes the close comradeship of the old man and the young man, and the deep affection which Elijah had inspired in Elisha. A life is doubled in power and joy when it can arouse such devotion in another life.

7. **And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went.** Eastern fashion, they probably attended Elijah and Elisha some distance on their way. **And stood over against them afar off.** "The fifty men are witnesses of the double miracle of dividing the water (verse 15); but not, of course, of what took place on the further side." — *New Century Bible.* **And they two stood by the Jordan.** Elijah felt that the Lord was bidding him cross to the other side, and yet there were the deep waters before him. The river was just such a hindrance as comes so often in the way of our carry-

8. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

---

ing out of God's will for us. Too often we are glad to accept the excuse and leave the path of difficult obedience. Not so Elijah; he knew that if God told him to cross the Jordan, God would provide a way.

8. **And Elijah took his mantle.** This mantle "had been the most characteristic token of the prophet's work. As a garment of rough hair it was a reminder of his privations in the wilderness, of his loneliness, of his toils, of his self-denials, and of his sufferings, in the execution of his mission. It was associated with the thought of a good fight fought, of a course finished, of a faith kept. Why should it not be a source of strength to him in a departing hour?" — *Professor Milligan.* **And wrapped it together.** Making it long and narrow, easily swung. **And smote the waters.** As Moses had lifted up over the waters of the Red Sea his wonder-working rod. **And they were divided hither and thither.** This had happened long before as the Israelites under Joshua approached Canaan from the east, at the end of their forty years in the wilderness. The priests bore the ark of God into the river, and as they carried the sacred vessel forward the waters receded, leaving a dry path over which the Israelites marched to the promised land. **So that they two went over on dry ground.** The depth of the Jordan varies greatly at different times of year, and in the autumn it may be forded at many places. Evidently this event took place at a time when the Jordan was not fordable.

9. **And it came to pass, when they were gone over.** Elijah was nearing the hills of his own country of Gilead; in a double sense he was going home. **That Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee.** One mark of a great soul is eagerness to bestow, and Elijah would not leave his beloved pupil without a farewell gift. **Before I am taken from thee,** and so no longer have power to bestow gifts upon thee. **And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.** Not twice as much of God's spirit as Elijah possessed; to ask that would have been presumptuous. But "a double portion" meant twice as much as any one else might receive, any of the sons of the prophets at Gilgal, Beth-el, and Jericho. This was the portion of the oldest son of a family (Deut. 21 : 17), and the request implies, therefore, that Elisha wished to become Elijah's spiritual heir, his successor as a prophet.

Illustration. "Christianity is to all of us what the majority of Christians with whom we come in contact represent it to be. In my youth the few Italians of whom I had chanced to hear were operatic singers, the few Frenchmen, dancing teachers. Forthwith all of Italy, to my imagination, was like a grove at morning vocal with the trills of music, and all of France trembled to the tread of dancers." — *Prof. George L. Raymond.*

10. **And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing.** It was a hard thing because such spiritual gifts are not man's to bestow, and how could Elijah be sure that God meant them for Elisha? **Nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee.** This vision would be a sign from heaven that Elisha's prayer was granted. It was a suitable sign because the fulfilment would imply close fellowship with Elijah and with the spiritual world which Elijah knew so well.

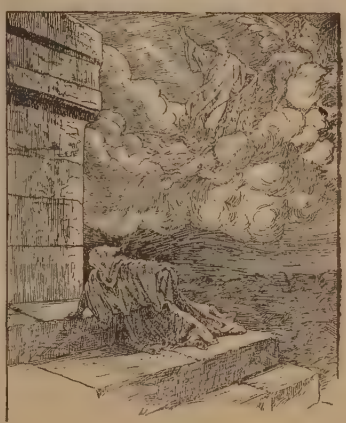
Illustration. Thus Mary Magdalene, who loved Christ so deeply, was the first to see him after his resurrection.

It shall be so unto thee. Elisha did witness the ascent of Elijah, and he became Elijah's successor; but in prophetic power he was far inferior to the great Tishbite. In his life "we listen in vain for any such pungent rebukes of wickedness as we hear from Samuel, from Nathan, from Elijah, from Isaiah." — *Rev. James M. Whiton, Ph.D.* Elisha, however, got results by quieter means, by training the sons of the prophets and at last by inspiring the revolution of Jehu. Also in Elisha "the stern-

11. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

ness of Elijah is gone ; his unrest, his discontent, his gloom have vanished. Elisha is more peaceful, more sympathetic, more human. He has all Elijah's strength, but more love." — *Bishop Mandell of Peterborough.*

11. **And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked.** How glad we should be to know what they talked about ! But the Bible is not a book for mere curiosity ; it is always hastening on to the main thing. **That, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire.** Archbishop Trench makes an instructive comparison with the ascension of our Lord : " He is not translated, he ascends. He came *from* heaven, and he returns *to* heaven, as to his natural home. The wonder is, not that he should now at length *go* to heaven, but that he should so long have tarried upon earth. No fire-chariot is needed for him ; and why ? there is nothing of earthly dross requiring to be burnt out of him. No shock, no whirlwind in his case ; for in his ascension there is no breach of the laws of his natural life, but all is in exactest conformity with them."



Doré.

Elijah Taken up into Heaven.

"The drivers were angels on horses of whiteness,
And its burning wheels turned upon axles of brightness;
A seraph unfolded its doors bright and shining,
All dazzling like gold of the seventh refining:
On the arch of the rainbow the chariot is gliding,
Through the paths of the thunder the horses are riding."
— *Hyslop's "Cameronian's Dream."*

Which parted them both asunder. We, like these two, go down into the dark valley and cross the river of death, our friends watching us from a distance, and One only with us. But " the Christian is happier than Elisha, inasmuch as his Master is mightier." — *W. H. Simcox.* Nothing can separate us from him. " Elijah and Elisha are together to-day. They enjoy the perfect fellowship and worship and service of the upper sanctuary." *Rev. John Mc Neill.* So will it be with all fellow travellers of earth, if their hearts are united in the love of God.

"A light that burst the concave sky! A shock, like earthquake's sound!
A whirlwind tore the mountain hoar, and shook the steadfast ground!
And wheels of fire and steeds of flame, by God's strong angels driven,
Between those two tempestuous flew, and snatched God's seer to heaven!"
— *George Lansing Taylor.*

And Elijah went up by a whirlwind. The prophet's life had been like a whirlwind and it was suitable that a whirlwind should carry him away. He had appeared suddenly and mysteriously on the scene at the beginning of the great drought, and all his appearances and disappearances were swift and inexplicable. As a man lives, so will he die. **Into heaven.** " In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the body of the prophet underwent that change which shall come upon the living at the day of Christ's appearing. Then, with every demonstration of welcome, he is ushered into the presence of Him whom he had served so lovingly upon the earth. Well for him that the Lord took him not at his word when he cried for death beneath the juniper-tree of the wilderness ! " — *William M. Taylor.*

How God Rewards Faithfulness. " We must have the life of an Elijah, if we are to have a translation at its close. Just as the river takes with it to the sea the color which its waters have contracted from the soil over which it has flowed throughout its course, so our death experiences will partake of the character, be it sombre or cheerful, which our lives have had. The best means of having light at death is to walk in the light through life." — *William M. Taylor.*

The highest reward of fidelity to God is communion with God. This was the

reward that Elijah valued most, and he received it, for the next we see of him, nine centuries later, is on Mount Hermon, holding intimate converse with Moses and with the glorified Christ.

III. **THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH,** vs. 12–18. The cry of Elisha as he saw his beloved master taken from him has been used many times since then to describe eminent Christians on their departure : " My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof ! " Elijah had been a second father to the young man, and he had been more than an army to the nation, defending it from its real enemies, the evil hosts of idolatry and of oppression. " His life has been called a 'One-man Ministry,' and there is much in it to warrant the description. He made his age. He withstood the onslaughts of evil as a rock shakes off the waves that break on it into volumes of spray. By heroic exploits and by deeds of superhuman might he strove single-handed against the tides of idolatry and sin that were sweeping over the land. In this he reminds us perpetually of Martin Luther and of John Knox." — *F. B. Meyer.* " Elijah's life was a perpetual effort to reform and save his people, to throw barriers athwart their path to ruin. What, in comparison, are all the achievements of art or of arms ? " — *Rev. Joseph Cross, D.D., LL.D.*

Illustration. " When the Armada was sent out against England, Spain thought that its mighty galleons were invincible. But the Lord Admiral was a heartless ignoramus, and failure was stamped on the expedition from the first. Great men, inspired by God and true to him, are the real defence of a nation in distress." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

Elisha's grief was also shown by tearing his outer garment in two, as a symbol that his own happiness had also been ruined. Then he saw, to his joy, that Elijah as he ascended had thrown off his well-known prophet's mantle of skin covered with hair, a very clear token that he bequeathed to Elisha the place of prophet which he was leaving. This was the mantle, Elisha would be quick to remember, which Elijah had thrown upon his shoulders while he was ploughing, in token that he was to take up the work of a prophet (1 Kings 19 : 19–21). Elisha took it up with awe and exultation, and at once proved his possession of Elijah's power by smiting the waters of the Jordan with the mantle, thus causing them to afford a dry pathway for his feet.

The sons of the prophets were still waiting and watching on the west bank of the Jordan, and saw the miracle which Elisha had worked, using Elijah's mantle as his instrument. At once they cried, " The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha ! " And in quick acceptance of his new supremacy, they came and bowed before him, acknowledging him as their chief. This act did honor to the sons of the prophets as much as to Elisha, showing that they harbored no petty spirit of jealousy, but were ready humbly and gladly to own God's favor wherever it was bestowed. Let us show our nobility by being equally ready to give honor where honor is due.

Nevertheless the question of Elijah's mysterious disappearance troubled the sons of the prophets. They had ascribed the swift movements through his life to the Spirit of God, which took him up and bore him from place to place as Philip was borne away after the conversion of the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8 : 40). Perhaps, they thought, the Spirit has carried him off to his death in some lonely glen, and we should pay his body the final reverence. Elisha withstood their desire to search till it seemed unseemly to oppose it, and as if he feared that the discovery of a still living Elijah would deprive him of his new preëminence. So he allowed them to search, and when they came back without Elijah or his dead body he was human enough to say, in effect, " I told you so."

Keep Up the Succession. In Dean Stanley's noble sermon, " The Succession of Spiritual Life," he instances the mechanical succession, such as the ordination of clergymen by the laying on of hands of the bishops, or as the Jewish high priest received the official dress of the preceding high priest. Then he instances the succession in office, as the holder of a college presidency is stirred by the thought of his honored predecessors. But the real succession is one of the mind and spirit, as Nicholas Lira lived again in Luther, Augustine in Calvin, Faraday in Tyndall ; as the touch of Burns's sympathetic hand on his head awoke the genius of Walter Scott, or as the mere sight of the apostolic face of John Wesley aroused in John Howard the burning desire to reform the prisons of Europe. " To admire what is admirable, to follow what is noble, to remember any such examples that have crossed our earthly pilgrimage, — this keeps alive before us the ideal of human nature and the essence of the Divine nature. The perpetuation of these graces is the true continuity of the Christian Church." — *Dean Stanley.*

"The wonder-working gospel, thus
From hand to hand has been conveyed;
We have the mantle still with us,
But where, O where, the Spirit's aid?" — *John Newton.*

The succession of noble living is to be passed on through the affection of the young for the old. "There is no more beautiful sight than to see young faces brighten when an old man enters the room." — *Bishop Mandell.* Let all parents, teachers, elderly persons so live that they would gladly see a double portion of their spirit resting on the young.

By no institution more than the Sunday school is the succession of Christian thought and living to be maintained. Sunday-school officers and teachers are watched by a multitude of young lives. They have unexcelled opportunities of influencing them for good. Let every Sunday school be indeed a school of the prophets.

On the pupils, as well as the officers and teachers, lies this responsibility. They are to take up Elijah's mantle. They are to carry, some day, the joyful burdens of the home, of the church, of business, of politics, of society. Only by a faithfulness now like that of Elisha will they be ready, when the time comes, to do the work of the departing Elijahs.

LESSON VII. — February 12.

ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN. — 2 Kings 4 : 8–37.

PRINT vs. 18–22, 27, 30, 32–35.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.* — JOHN 5 : 25.

Devotional Reading : 1 Cor. 15 : 50–58.
Reference Material : John 11 : 1–46.
Primary Topic : ELISHA BRINGS A BOY TO LIFE.
Lesson Material : 2 Kings 4 : 8–37. Print vs. 18–22, 27, 30, 32–35.
Memory Verse : Jehovah is gracious and merciful. Ps. 111 : 4.
Junior Topic : HOW ELISHA BROUGHT A BOY TO LIFE.
Lesson Material : 2 Kings 4 : 8–37. Print vs. 18–22, 27, 30, 32–35.
Memory Verses : John 11 : 25, 26.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : ELISHA HELPING IN A HOME.
Topic for Young People and Adults : OUR MINISTRY OF COMFORT AND HELP.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may build, out of stone blocks or wooden blocks painted stone color, with pasteboard laid over the top for a roof, a model of a house in Palestine. There are no windows on the outside, and there is an inner court, open to the sky, on which the various rooms open. As this was a rich man's house, there were probably two of these courts, one behind the other, with a passageway between. Build Elisha's room on the roof, with an outer stairway leading to it. Use the sand map to show Shunem and Mount Carmel.

For the Intermediate and Senior Classes questions on the lesson may be written on slips of paper placed, face downward, in a circle around the house and (if you use the sand map) on the way to Mount Carmel, these questions to be taken up by the pupils in order, read aloud, and answered.

The Younger Classes, of course, need the lesson of hospitality and kindness as well as the older classes.

The Older Classes will review briefly the familiar story. You may do this by getting some member of the class to tell the story in the character of the boy, who relates it years afterward to his own son. The writer of the story should introduce accounts of all the Eastern customs involved, and should make the whole as vivid as possible. Then go on to make the lesson practical by applying it to (1) our hospitality (Is it growing less? To whom should it be shown? What are the marks of an ideal host or hostess?); (2) our ministry in our own homes, and how we can make them abodes of peace and happiness; (3) our ministry in homes of sorrow and need, especially in sick-rooms. Three persons — and you will select the most appropriate ones you can find — will be appointed in advance to open the discussion of each topic, and conduct it.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher places this event about B.C. 900, Jehoram, son of Ahab, being king of Israel.

Place. — Shunem, about five miles north of Jezreel, from twenty to twenty-five miles from Mount Carmel. It was near Nain, where Christ worked a similar miracle.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Bible accounts of births in answer to prayer.
Bible instances of hospitality rewarded.
Bible miracles of the raising of the dead.
The structure of Eastern houses.
Bible teachings on the connection between power and prayer.
Elijah's similar miracle compared with Elisha's.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Macmillan's *The Olive Leaf*. Stanley's *Sermons for Children*. Mrs. Henry Dawson in *The Christian World Pulpit*, No. 1871. Chapman's *Revival Sermons*. Banks's *Heavenly Trade-Winds*. McNeill's *Sermons*, Vol. II. *Monday Club Sermons*, Series 2, 10, 16, 23, 29, and 36, by Currier, Twitchell, Griffis, Loomis, Clark, and Noyes. Hastings's *Great Men and Women of the Bible*. Miller's *Devotional Hours with the Bible*. Krummacher's *The Early Days of Elisha*. "Elisha's Chamber," by Richard Wilton. Poems by Bernard Barton, N. P. Willis, and W. Cosmo Monkhouse. Newton's *Olney Hymns*. Longfellow's "The Reaper and the Flowers."

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Elisha's Ministry of Comfort and Help, and Ours.

I. THE SHUNAMMITE'S HOSPITALITY REWARDED, vs. 8–17.
   The prophet's chamber.
   The promised son.
   The rewards of hospitality.

II. THE SHUNAMMITE TAKES HER GREAT NEED TO ELISHA, vs. 18–31.
   "Is it well with the child?"
   "I will not leave thee."

III. ELISHA'S GOD-GIVEN POWER, vs. 32–37.
   "Take up thy son."
   Our ministry of comfort and help.

I. **THE SHUNAMMITE'S HOSPITALITY REWARDED**, vs. 8–17. Elisha was a man of different mold from Elijah, as Joshua differed from Moses, Samuel from Eli, Solomon from David. Successors have their own work to do and must do it in their own way, and not be judged by the standards of their predecessors. Elisha was a milder man than Elijah. To be sure, at the outset of his ministry he cursed the young boys of Beth-el who had mocked him and who thereupon were eaten by bears ; but most of his miracles were works of gentleness and mercy. Such a miracle was the healing of the fountain of Jericho (2 Kings 2 : 19–22) ; also the miracle of the trenches of water, which saved the Israelites from the Moabites (2 Kings 3) ; also the miracle of the vessels of oil, which saved a poor widow from her creditor (2 Kings 4 : 1–7) ; also the miracles of the pot of pottage, the feeding of the hundred men, and the iron axe-head (2 Kings 4 : 38–44 ; 6 : 1–7). We are now to study a conspicuous example of Elisha's kindness.

"The story of the Shunammite and her son is one of the most charming idyls in the Bible. It abounds in the most beautiful touches of nature ; and though the mold in which it is cast is peculiarly Eastern, its simple pathos appeals to the universal human heart." — *Rev. Hugh Macmillan, F.R.S.E.*

Shunem (the modern village of Solam) was about five miles north of Jezreel, on the northern border of the Plain of Jezreel, southeast of Mount Carmel, and southwest of the Sea of Galilee. It belonged to the tribe of Issachar (Josh. 19 : 18) and there the Philistines encamped before the battle of Gilboa (1 Sam. 28 : 4). Abishag, the fair maiden who tended David in his old age, was a Shunammite, and her beauty may have suggested "Shulammite" for the heroine of the Song of Solomon.

A wealthy woman of Shunem was in the habit of entertaining Elisha whenever the prophet passed that way, and at last, impressed by his holiness, she persuaded her husband to build him a permanent guest chamber on the roof of the house, in lieu of the temporary affair that was usually erected there for such a purpose. This room was furnished in the best style of the day, with a bed, a table, a stool, and a lamp-stand ; and Elisha used it as his own whenever he reached Shunem in his journeys. "What she did for him has entered into the speech of Christendom as the synonym of hospitality to ministers of the gospel. The 'prophet's chamber' now has its place as an institution in many a Christian home." — *Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.*

Illustration. I am reminded of the room in the Boston house of Governor Claflin of Massachusetts, near my office, which was always reserved for Whittier. The poet came and went as he pleased, and made the room his own without disturbing the rest of the household.

In return for this hospitality, Elisha sought to do something for the Shunammite, and asked her if there was not some favor she would like him to ask of the king (prob-

18. And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to his servant, Carry him to his mother.

ably Ahab's son Jehoram) or the general of his army. She answered that she had numerous powerful relatives, well able to protect her goods and care for her in time of trouble. It was to be very different with her, however, in later years (2 Kings 8 : 1–6). Elisha then turned to his attendant, Gehazi, who suggested that the home had not been blest with that which every Hebrew wife desired above all else, a son ; and her husband was old. Then Elisha was led to prophesy to the Shunammite that within a year a son should be born to her ; and this happened, to the mother's great joy.

" How often is divine contentment the quickest road to that which otherwise you may struggle for and not obtain. Let go, and you get. Grasp, and you lose. This woman, traveling in the greatness of her simplicity, arrived at that which otherwise she never could have had." — *Rev. John McNeill.*

THE REWARDS OF HOSPITALITY. " Among the more primitive peoples of the Orient, hospitality is still not merely a personal and social virtue, it is the supreme and central virtue. It is not limited to chosen guests, but its scope is indicated in the familiar proverbs, ' Every stranger is an invited guest,' and ' The guest while in the house is its lord.' But in the busy and more conventional western world it is a much neglected grace." — *Rev. Edward M. Noyes, D.D.*

Upper Chamber of an Eastern House.

The Shunammite's hospitality was given unselfishly, with no thought of reward, yet her reward was great. " Such is often the case with generous, unselfish, Christian hospitality. We never know what good shall come of service for others in their need, when such service is rendered in the name and for the sake of Christ." — *Justin E. Twitchell.*

" The example of the hospitable Shunammite reminds us sweetly of the words uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 10 : 41, 42), ' He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.' " — *Krummacher.*

Illustration. Many guests give far more to the home than they receive from it. For instance, Bishop Selwyn, of New Zealand, who was entertained in England by Sir John Patteson. The good bishop, on leaving, laid his hand upon the brilliant young son, and said to Lady Patteson, " I think you must give me Coley." From these words sprang the wonderful work of John Coleridge Patteson, who succeeded Bishop Selwyn as missionary bishop of the South Pacific, and there met a glorious martyr's death.

" The beauty of the home is order ; the blessing of the home is contentment ; the glory of the home is hospitality ; the crown of the home is godliness."

II. **THE SHUNAMMITE TAKES HER GREAT NEED TO ELISHA**, vs. 18–31. " Many a mother reads this tender story as if it were a chapter out of her own life. Many children who read it remember the day when a little brother or sister lay dead in their own home." — *J. R. Miller.*

18. **And when the child was grown.** A young boy, but old enough to walk and talk — just at what mothers are wont to call " the most interesting age." **He went out to his father to the reapers.** Probably slipping out of the house without his mother's knowing it. The farmers of Palestine lived in towns for mutual protection and for society, their fields being outside the settlement.

19. **And he said unto his father, My head, my head.** Doubtless, in that hot sun, the lad was smitten with a sunstroke. " A Palestinian sun in April is often fierce

20. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

21. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out.

22. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the servants, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

---

and smiting. Even of the strong man, Judith's husband, it is written, 'who died in the barley harvest. For as he stood overseeing them that bound sheaves in the field, the heat came upon his head, and he fell on his bed, and died in his city.'" — *Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.* **And he said to his servant, Carry him to his mother.** All hurts and griefs are taken to loving mothers.

20. **And . . . he sat on her knees till noon.** So that the sunstroke must have come in the morning. "In the East the sun often becomes intensely hot by ten o'clock." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **And then died.** There is no doubt about the miracle that followed; the child was not in a faint, but was dead.

21. **And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God.** Thus also Elijah took the dead son of the widow of Zarephath to his own chamber and laid the body on his bed (1 Kings 17 : 19). **And shut the door upon him, and went out.** "Behind that shut door, with that dead child, how much of her life lay dead!" — *Albert H. Currier.*

22. **And she called unto her husband.** Evidently she did not tell him that the child was dead. She may have wished to spare him the sorrow till she saw whether the prophet could restore the boy or not. **Send me, I pray thee, one of the servants, and one of the asses.** The servant was to go behind the ass, as she rode, and drive it forward with his stick. **That I may run to the man of God.** Very likely she had heard how Elijah had raised from death the son of the widow of Zarephath, and hoped for a similar miracle for her son. "Let us seek after the heavenly Elisha in our troubles, in our dangerous joys and dangerous sorrows. Let us seek to him and to him alone. He is there. He will understand us, and especially if we find that our nearest and dearest are failing us, let us ride forward only the more swiftly to the only One who can comprehend accurately all that weighs upon our spirits." — *Rev. John McNeill.* **And come again.** "She had evidently married a quiet, unobtrusive sort of man some years her senior, who, sensible man that he must have been, had allowed his 'better half' the preëminence. The situation is often repeated in modern life. It is one of nature's happy methods of compensation to allow the woman the privilege of respecting the man's seniority while he acknowledges her more enterprising and forceful ability." — *Mrs. Henry Dawson.*

THE JOURNEY TO ELISHA. Her husband was surprised at the request, since it was not the day of the new moon or the Sabbath. His answer "implies that it was the ancient custom to make somewhat lengthy pilgrimages to prophets and to sacred places at the new moons and on the Sabbaths." — *New Century Bible.* He seems to have forgotten the sickness of his boy, and not to have connected his wife's request with the lad. From Shunem to the nearest part of Mount Carmel was a journey of from twenty to twenty-five miles — four hours at least. No wonder the Shunammite urged on her driver, remembering the still body of the little boy lying on the prophet's bed in Shunem!

"IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD?" Elisha was on high ground and saw the Shunammite coming while she was yet at some distance. Instantly fearing that something was wrong, he sent his servant Gehazi to run and meet her, asking her "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?" Though her heart was breaking in grief, the mother answered, "It is well." She could not talk over the terrible event with her husband, still less with a servant; she would speak of it first to the prophet whose prayer to God had given her the child. Even to Elisha she could not speak the awful words, "My boy is dead," but hid the sad fact under a wild reproach, "Did I ask for a son? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?" Elisha knew at once what had happened.

Illustration. Dr. Doddridge, the hymn-writer, once at the funeral of a beloved child preached a sermon on this text, "Is it well with the child? . . . **It is well,**" the words having been actually written on the child's coffin.

27. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gĕ-hā′-zī came near to thrust her away; but the man of God said, Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and Jehovah hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

Even in the death of a child we can say, "It is well," "because in God's sight all that happens is well, if only we use it rightly. 'It is well,' because the child that dies in its innocence is taken, if any human creature is, to the presence of God and of Jesus Christ. 'It is well,' because it makes, or ought to make, on our hearts an impression which perhaps nothing else can make." — *Dean Stanley.*

Even permanent illness or deformity may be so borne by a child that he can say regarding it, "It is well." For example, Lord Byron had a club foot which he allowed to make him miserable, sensitive, selfish, and proudly suspicious all his life; while Sir Walter Scott had a similar misfortune but was always cheerful and friendly, and was merely turned by it into the studious life which made him famous.

27. **And when she came to the man of God to the hill.** Some foothill of Mount Carmel, "a spot forever made sacred by the triumph of Elijah over the prophets of Baal, and surely a place to inspire confidence in the power of God to do wondrous things." — *Louis Albert Banks, D.D.* **She caught hold of his feet.** A common Eastern way of enforcing a petition. **And Gehazi came near to thrust her away,** as the disciples wished to keep the Syro-Phœnician mother, not far from this place, away from the healing Christ. Already Gehazi was showing the faulty character which brought him to ruin later. **But the man of God said, Let her alone.** "In an old church synod a rule was adopted forbidding ministers to keep dogs, lest the poor who came to their doors should be hurt instead of fed or helped." — *J. R. Miller.* Elisha showed the tender sympathy of a true minister. **For her soul is vexed within her.** "A good lesson is found here, to restrain our judgments when hasty to condemn fancied violations of courtesy and civility. A heart, overwhelmed with the bitterness of grief or trouble, may disregard or be oblivious to the proprieties of society. Often this is the secret of seeming rudeness." — *Albert H. Currier.* **And Jehovah hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.** "When I read this about Elisha, I feel inclined to say to him, 'Good-by, Elisha. Great and all as you are, you will not serve my turn. I need one from whom nothing is hid, from whom nothing can be hid." — *Rev. John McNeill.*

Staff.

GEHAZI'S FRUITLESS ERRAND. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, was probably a much younger man, and there was need of haste, since in that hot climate decomposition sets in speedily after death, and burial is immediate. Elisha may have thought that his staff in Gehazi's hands could restore the child to life, and so he sent him off with it post-haste, bidding him greet no one by the way, and so be delayed by the long, ceremonious salutations of the East. Or, he may merely have wished to get rid of the servant that he might comfort the Shunammite alone. Still another possibility, quite plausible in view of what we afterwards learn about Gehazi's character, is that the young man was forward and conceited (note his seeking to thrust the Shunammite away, verse 27), and Elisha wished to make him more humble by showing him how powerless he was in such a case as this. At any rate, Gehazi ran on ahead, laid the staff on the face of the dead boy, and failed to accomplish anything. Returning, he met Elisha and the mother, now on their way to Shunem according to the mother's insistence, and was obliged to confess that he could not arouse the child from the sleep of death.

Illustration. "Elisha's rod in the hands of Gehazi was as powerless as the bow of Ulysses in the hands of the suitors." — *Rev. Edward M. Noyes, D.D.*

Illustration. "When Saladin looked at the sword of Richard Cœur de Lion he wondered that a blade so ordinary should have wrought such mighty deeds. The English king bared his arm and said, 'It was not the sword that did these things, it was the arm of Richard.'" — *J. R. Miller.*

Illustration. "No Bible hid in the trunk of the wayward son is such a talisman as to keep him in the paths of righteousness and make his career noble. He can

30. And the mother of the child said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

32. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

33. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto Jehovah.

34. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

---

never, in the crucial hour, rely on a piety which any other soul than his own has attained." — *Rev. DeWitt S. Clark, D.D.*

Dr. Hugh Macmillan, in his notable sermon, "The Staff and the Sacrifice," sees in Gehazi's fruitless effort an example of impersonal service: "Many try to do good by means of others. The staff they use represents their money, and their Gehazi is the missionary or minister, the society or collector, whom they use in distributing their help. Thus they themselves never come into contact with the evil they seek to redress and have no personal interest in the objects of their charity. In spite of the multitudes of our societies and our innumerable efforts, the dead body of the misery that is in the world is as cold and impassive as ever."

Dr. Loomis compares Gehazi's staff to the tract or the letter that we may send to an unconverted friend, when we should talk to him about Jesus Christ face to face.

"Thus, like the weeping Shunammite,
For many dead in sin we grieve;
Now, Lord, display thine arm of might,
Cause them to hear thy voice and live.

"Thy preachers bear the staff in vain,
Though at thine own command we go;
Lord, we have tried and tried again,
We find them dead, and leave them so.

"Come then thyself — to every heart
The glory of thy name make known;
The means are our appointed part,
The power and grace are thine alone." — *John Newton*

30. **And the mother of the child said.** She had come for the purpose of bringing Elisha to her dead boy, and she had a mother's persistence. **As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth.** The form of this oath indicates that the Shunammite, in that time when Baal worship was fashionable, had faith in Jehovah and in his prophet. **I will not leave thee.** "Why do you suppose this story was placed in the Old Testament? It would seem to me that among other reasons it is there for this purpose, that we might understand what it is to pray with importunity." — *J. Wilbur Chapman.* "Wherever a parent pleads for a child it touches God; it pulls hard on his heartstrings. For is not he too a parent?" — *Rev. Samuel Lane Loomis, D.D.* **And he arose, and followed her.** It was a long, hard, hot walk of about eight hours. What strong words of comfort Elisha must have spoken to the distracted mother on the journey!

III. **ELISHA'S GOD-GIVEN POWER,** vs. 32–37. "I think the father, ere this, had learned of the death of his boy; that it certainly had dawned upon him why the mother would see the prophet, and that he had been anxiously waiting her return." — *Justin E. Twitchell.*

32. **And when Elisha was come.** The child was found just where the mother had left him, motionless in death.

33. **He . . . shut the door upon them twain.** "He shut out weeping, and shut in prayer." — *Cambridge Bible.* **And prayed unto Jehovah.** Elijah also prayed when he restored to life the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17 : 21).

34. **And he went up, and lay upon the child.** In this respect also Elisha imitated Elijah at Zarephath (1 Kings 17 : 21). "This is the history of faith everywhere. One victory prepares the way for another. That is why men are urged to testify, and tell what the Lord has done for them." — *Rev. Samuel Lane Loomis, D.D.* **And put his mouth upon his mouth . . . and he stretched himself upon him.** "Does not the stretching of the prophet upon the dead child — each member of his own body being applied to the corresponding member of the lifeless corpse, and by this sympathetic contact imparting his own vitality to it, and ultimately raising it to life — figure forth in the most beautiful and suggestive manner the incarnation of God, by which he brought his infinitude within the limitations of human nature and human

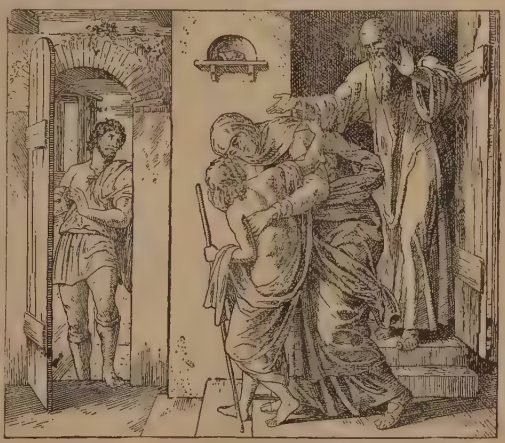
35. Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

existence, touching it at every sympathetic point, and so raised it from a death in sin to newness of life in himself?" — *Rev. Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*

Illustration. In our own Christian work "nothing can take the place of this hand-to-hand contact. There is a legend of an English monk, who died at the monastery of Arenberg, where he had copied and illuminated many books, hoping to be rewarded in heaven. Long after his death his tomb was opened, and nothing could be seen of his remains but the right hand, with which he had done his pious work, and which had been marvelously preserved from decay." — *Louis Albert Banks, D.D.*

"O loving, open hands that give!
Soft hands the tear that dry!
O patient hands that toil to bless!
How can ye ever die?
Ten thousand vows from yearning hearts
To heaven's own gates shall soar,
And bear ye up, as Anselm's hand
Those unseen angels bore." — *S. T. Wallace.*

Illustration. A rich young man, when schools for imbeciles began to be opened in Europe, went there to study the methods, and, returning, advertised for the most imbecile child that could be found. The one he obtained was a boy five years old who had never stood, or chewed a hard substance, and could only lie a helpless mass on the floor. After trying to arouse him in every way he could think of, this young man lay down beside him every day for half an hour, reading aloud. This he did every day for six months, and there was still no sign of recognition; but one day, worn out, he stopped reading. He noticed a restlessness in the little mass of flesh, and put his head down near the little hand. After great effort the poor child managed to lay a trembling finger on his friend's lips, as if to tell him to keep on reading. Five years later that boy was standing on a platform repeating the names of the Presidents of the United States and answering correctly many questions about American history. —*Condensed from Bishop Simpson.*



Julius von Schnorr.

Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son.

35. **Then he . . . walked in the house once to and fro.** Either in anxiety and perplexity, or to restore his energies. **And went up, and stretched himself upon him.** Repeating his first operation. **And the child sneezed seven times.** The meaning of the word translated "sneezed" is very doubtful, and the ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint, omits "and the child sneezed," reading, "and stretched himself upon him seven times." "How grateful the sound of sneezing in this case! God sometimes makes things that are in themselves trivial, and which otherwise were contemptible, a peal of joy-bells." — *Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.* **And the child opened his eyes.** Respiration had been restored, the heart began to beat again, and consciousness returned.

"Take Up Thy Son." "Elisha takes the child by the hand and bids Gehazi call his mother. And I think I see her rushing up and down the streets of Shunem saying,

'My boy was dead and is alive again.' And there was joy in the old home in Shunem." — *J. Wilbur Chapman.*

But what if the miracle had not been vouchsafed to Elisha? And what of the myriads of mothers and fathers whose children are taken from them and not restored? "They live to beckon them heavenward; to be monitors for good to them amid the spiritual dangers of this world; to serve as God's angels of mercy in rescuing them from soul-destroying habits and conditions." — *Albert H. Currier.*

"Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The Reaper came that day;
'Twas an angel visited the green earth
And took the flowers away.

"They shall all bloom in fields of light,
Transplanted by God's care;
And saints upon their garments white
These sacred blossoms wear."
— *Henry W. Longfellow.*

OUR MINISTRY OF COMFORT AND HELP. Dr. Grenfell describes his mission work as "the gospel of tinned milk." The phrase is a good description of the practical helpfulness that characterizes Christianity. The Christian's dearest wish is:

"If I can live
To make some pale face brighter, and to give
A second lustre to some tear-dimmed eye,
Or e'en impart
One throb of comfort to an aching heart,
Or cheer some way-worn soul in passing by." — *Helen Hunt Jackson.*

The pastor of Grace H. Dodge, the beloved philanthropist, said of her: "While still a young girl, she made a practice of visiting and helping those who were poor or in trouble. She went one day to her mother and told her that she had found out what there was for her to do. Henceforth she meant to devote herself to helping people." That was what she did throughout her life.

The career of Miss Sophie Wright, "the best-beloved woman in New Orleans," shows how little wealth is needed for wide helpfulness. She was poor and a cripple, but she founded the night schools of New Orleans, and she did a great work for crippled children.

Illustration. Chances for helpfulness are all around us, if we only have eyes for them. William H. Baldwin, president of the Long Island Railroad, once looked from an elevated train and saw in the street below the sad face of a suffering child. He left the train at the next stop, hurried back, found that the child was sick, and did not go to his business until the sufferer was in the hospital.

LESSON VIII. — February 19.

ELISHA AND NAAMAN THE SYRIAN. — 2 Kings 5 : 1–27.

PRINT vs. 1–4, 9–14.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Bless Jehovah, O my soul,***
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases. — Ps. 103 : 2, 3.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 103 : 1–12.
Reference Material: Luke 4 : 16–30; 5 : 12–16.
Primary Topic: A LITTLE GIRL HELPING.
Lesson Material: 2 Kings 5 : 1–14. Print vs. 1–4, 9–14.
Memory Verse: Even a child maketh himself known by his doings;
Whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.
Prov. 20 : 11.
Junior Topic: A YOUNG GIRL'S SERVICE.
Lesson Material: 2 Kings 5 : 1–14. Print vs. 1–4, 9–14.
Memory Verses: Ps. 103 : 2–4.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: ELISHA HELPING A FOREIGNER.
Topic for Young People and Adults: HOW TO OVERCOME NATIONAL AND RACIAL PREJUDICES.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

In the Younger Classes the emphasis will naturally be placed upon the service performed by the little Hebrew maiden, and the teaching will be that every boy and girl has chances for splendid service in his own home. A week in advance, if possible, give each pupil a card marked "H. H." Explain that this stands for "Home Helpfulness." Ask them to read the lesson first and then see how they can imitate the little Hebrew girl by helping around the home. Each is to make a list of the different things he does during the week to help on the family life and work, and these lists are to be read in the class session.

In the Older Classes the emphasis will be laid on the overcoming of national and racial prejudices — a lesson needed by all in these days of international clashes and of close contacts in our nation among those of different countries and races. Review the lesson story, showing how the Syrian general and the Hebrew prophet were brought together, and then get the class to tell of the different racial and national elements in your own town and what each can do for the others. So far as possible, get representatives of these different elements to take part in the class session, giving their experiences and stating their desires with reference to the community life and our nation.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Chapters in Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible* and *Great Texts of the Bible*. Liddon's *Sermons to the People*. McNeill's *Sermons*, Vol. I. Moody's *Great Joy*. Geikie's *Landmarks of Old Testament History* and *Old Testament Characters*. Sangster's *Women of the Bible*. Brown's *Nameless Women of the Bible*. Horton's *Women of the Old Testament*. Whyte's *Bible Characters*. Maclaren's *Expositions*. Ainsworth's *The Pilgrim Church*. Morrow's *Twentieth Century Practice of Medicine* (on leprosy). Tuckwell's *Nuggets from the Bible Mine*. A strong sermon by Rev. J. Ross Stevenson, D.D., in *The Bible Magazine*, Vol. I. Watkinson's *The Duty of Imperial Thinking*. Andrew Murray's *Why Do You Believe?* Greenhough's *Half Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery* (two sermons). Vaughan's *Temple Sermons*. Hasell's *Bible Partings*. Nicoll's *The Garden of Nuts*. Rowlands's *Sermons on Historical Subjects*. Newton's *Olney Hymns*. Fuller's famous "Christening Sermon." Henry van Dyke's drama, *The House of Rimmon*. "The Missionary Child," poem by Herbert Kynaston. "Naaman's Servant," in Keble's *Christian Year*.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher places this miracle at about 897 B.C. Ben-hadad II. was probably king of Syria, and Jehoram, son of Ahab, king of Israel.

Place. — Some think that Naaman found Elisha at Jezreel, others at Samaria. The former is nearer to the Jordan, but nothing is said about the time taken by Naaman in going thither from Elisha's house.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Syria: the country and its history.
Hebrew laws regarding leprosy.
Cases of leprosy in the Old Testament.
Christ's healing of lepers.
The Jordan compared with other rivers.
The nature and power of faith.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Jehovah's Mercy Shown to a Heathen General.

I. A GREAT MAN — BUT A LEPER (vs. 1–7).
   Naaman's valor and honor.
   Naaman's terrible disease.
   The little maiden and her good word.
   The perplexity of the king of Israel.

II. A POOR MAN — BUT GOD'S PROPHET (vs. 8–12).
   "There is a prophet in Israel."
   "Go — wash."
   "Behold, I thought —."

III. JEHOVAH THE ONE GOD (vs. 13–19).
   The servant's wise advice.
   The wonderful restoration.
   Naaman's confession of Jehovah.
   Naaman and Rimmon.

IV. GEHAZI'S LEPROSY (vs. 20–27).
   Gehazi's lie.
   Elisha's rebuke.
   The awful penalty of sin.

1. Now Nā′-ă-măn, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him Jehovah had given victory unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valor, *but he was* a leper.

I. **A GREAT MAN — BUT A LEPER** (vs. 1–7). We are to study the most famous of Elisha's miracles, the one referred to by our Lord himself in his sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4 : 27) as a conspicuous example of divine grace shown to one who was not a Jew.

1. **Now Naaman.** His name is thought to mean "pleasantness." **Captain of the host.** General of the army. **Of the king of Syria,** Ben-hadad II. Syria is directly north of Palestine, its capital being Damascus. **Was a great man with his master.** Ben-hadad had formerly led his army himself, but was now too old. **And honorable.** The word here means "held in honor." **Because by him Jehovah had**

2. And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maiden; and she waited on Nā'-ă-măn's wife.

given victory unto Syria. This strange expression may be accounted for by inferring that the victory was over Ahab, the wicked king, the destruction of whose house had been foretold by Elijah at God's command. **He was also a mighty man of valor.** The ancient Jewish tradition is that Naaman was the Syrian who made a chance shot with his bow and killed King Ahab. **But he was a leper.** Some such sad and often tragic qualification must be set off against most good fortune that befalls men. "There is always the other side of things. If we could change personalities, we should have to be prepared to take not only the joys and the opportunities and the satisfactions of that other man's life, but also the martyrdoms, the baffle-ments, the burdens and the unlifting shadows. Remembering this may help to make us less envious and more sympathetic." — *Rev. P. C. Ainsworth.* "'But' often expresses the concentrated essence of ingratitude. You want your bread to be buttered on both sides, and round the edges, too. My brother, it would not be good for you any more than it would be for a child. Be thankful if the butter is well laid on one side. A great many have to eat their bread dry, and some find it hard to get it even in that form." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

From a photograph.

Damascus, the House of Naaman the Leper.

"Leprosy is the most ancient, the most exclusively human, and in the popular conception the most dreaded of all diseases. It is a universal malady, affecting all races and occurring in all climates and under all conditions of life. It still survives and maintains its supremacy as the patriarch of diseases." — *P. A. Morrow.*

"Not only has leprosy always been a vile and loathsome disease, gradually eating away the flesh so that the face and form of the sufferer undergo horrible disfiguration, but by degrees, in its slow progress, a finger, a hand, or a foot may be eaten away and drop off through decay. There have been, in our day, men and women of a heroism so rare and a devotion so extreme that they have gone to dwell voluntarily in a leper community, accepting for Christ's sake their sentence of lifelong imprisonment." — *Margaret E. Sangster.*

If Naaman had been an Israelite, he could not have remained as general. "Leprosy in Israel involved seclusion, involved isolation, involved excommunication. When one of the kings of Judah was suddenly smitten with leprosy, for an intrusion into the priest's office, it followed as a matter of course that he must 'dwell in a separate house to the day of his death,' and leave the exercise of sovereignty to a regent son." — *Dean C. J. Vaughan.*

"What an excuse had Naaman for a life of idle regret, absolute uselessness, and sinful repining! With what discomfort, with what distress, with what shame and mortification, must each act of his life, social, political, military, have been accompanied! Yet none the less did he do his duty, command his energies, and rule his spirit. Thou who hast in thy health, or in thy work, or in thy home, some little drawback — little it must be in comparison with his — go and do thou likewise." — *Dean C. J. Vaughan.*

Leprosy is the Bible type of sin, and a fit symbol it is. "The Bible is not rude; it takes everything into consideration, but it will not speak false words: amiable, but an amiable sinner; refined, a refined sinner; wealthy, a wealthy sinner; a peer of the realm, a sinner as regards your spiritual condition." — *John McNeill.*

2. **And the Syrians had gone out in bands.** "A part of the misery inflicted by the Syrians on Israel was caused by the forays in which their light-armed bands, very much like the borderers on the marches of Wales and Scotland, descended upon the country and carried off plunder and captives before they could be pursued." — *Rev.*

3. And she said unto her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria ! then would he recover him of his leprosy.

4. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maiden that is of the land of Israel.

James Hastings, D.D. **And had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maiden.** According to the horrible custom of the day, the little girl was sold as a slave. It was sad indeed for her to be separated from her family and home, but God brought good out of this evil ; and he will always do it, if we let him. **And she waited on Naaman's wife.** A little serving maid was to bring the aid for which the best physicians in Syria had doubtless been sought, and in vain. " God's deliverance always comes through unexpected instruments." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

Group of Lepers by the Wayside.

Illustration. " It was a servant in the home of the great Lord Shaftesbury who brought her young master to Christ, and launched him on one of the noblest careers of beneficence. A little Welsh girl conceived a great desire for a Bible, and walked over the hills to Mr. Charles of Bala, in order to procure one. That was a little seed from which the British and Foreign Bible Society, with all its beneficent fruits in every country under heaven, has grown." — *Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D.*

3. **And she said unto her mistress.** " This girl must have had something about her to make those people listen to her ; she must have shown her religion in her life." — *D. L. Moody.* **Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria !** " In the little maid's eyes the prophet is greater than the captain of the host ; her suggestion is that Naaman should seek Elisha's presence." — *Cambridge Bible.* If she had been worldly wise, she might have hesitated to speak for fear that Elisha, after all, might not heal Naaman, and then she would be blamed ; but no thought of self entered into her generous exclamation. **Then would he recover him of his leprosy.** " Recover " here has the old English sense of " cure," as in Shakespeare, *Tempest*, II., 2. 97 : " If all the wine in my bottle will recover him, I will help his ague." The little maid was eager to return good for evil, and her warm heart went out in loving sympathy to her afflicted master.

"Proud disputants for power,
See whom your God, to view,
Rich in his kingdom's dower,
Sets in the midst of you !
With Jordan's washings seven,
Take, leprous soul defiled,
Bathed with the dews of heaven,
The flesh of that young child !" — *Herbert Kynaston.*

4. **And one went in, and told his lord.** The marginal reading is clearer : " he " (that is, Naaman) " went in." " His lord " means the king of Syria. **Saying, Thus and thus said the maiden that is of the land of Israel.** The little maid must have had a fine character, that so much should be made of her suggestion.

" AM I GOD ? " The king of Syria eagerly accepted the chance of winning back the health of his able general, and at once gave Naaman a letter of introduction to the king of Israel. Naaman himself carried a royal gift which he doubtless thought sufficient to procure any favor. It consisted of ten talents of silver, weighing more than a thousand pounds and worth about $20,000 in our money, and able to purchase perhaps ten times as much ; also six thousand golden shekels, weighing about two talents and worth about $60,000 ; also ten " changes of raiment," or suits of rich garments. It was a magnificent present for a king, to say nothing of a poor prophet.

" Naaman's splendid chariot, with its long train of guards and servants, rolled

9. So Nā'-ă-măn came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

10. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

away from beautiful Damascus, past the Lebanon defiles, and, fording the Lebanon torrents, came to the king of Israel at Jezreel, his summer capital." — *Hastings*. Some think he was at Samaria; others, in Dothan, between Samaria and Jezreel.

The reading of the letter brought consternation to the king of Israel, for it addressed him as the healer, and entreated him to cure Naaman of his leprosy. Evidently the king of Syria did not have clearly presented to him the suggestion of the little Hebrew maiden. "Am I God, to kill and to make alive?" cried the king of Israel, for a leper was as one dead. "See how the king of Syria tries to pick a quarrel with me!" And he even rent his royal robes in his dismay. The powerful King Ben-hadad had recently been at war with Israel, and his sending such a preposterous note by the hand of his general certainly looked like a pretext for another war.

II. **A POOR MAN — BUT GOD'S PROPHET**, vs. 8–12. "The king's act was public; his complaint was public; he wished his subjects to know the outrageous conduct, as he viewed it, of the Syrian king. Thus the rumor went through the town and reached the ears of the prophet, who therefore sent a message to the king." — *Pulpit Commentary*. Elisha's message was spirited and confident. The prophet upbraided the king for rending his clothes rather than relying gladly on Jehovah and his prophet. "Let him come now to me," said Elisha, "rather than to you, even though you are the king. He shall know that there is a prophet in Israel, though you seem to have forgotten it altogether." It was a merited rebuke, and shows that Elisha was not without the courage of Elijah.

9. **So Naaman came.** Doubtless he was fretting at this postponement of his cure. **With his horses and with his chariots.** The magnificent cavalcade would attract a great crowd from the entire city, who would flock to see the famous general. **And stood at the door of the house of Elisha.** A lowly cottage, we may be sure. Seldom in history has there been a more striking contrast between futile pomp and the might of humble holiness. Compare this scene with the similar but greater scenes, Paul before Agrippa and Christ before Pilate and Herod. "Mighty Naaman in his palace, lowly Elisha in his cottage! let him who envies those above him, and thinks his own estate unhappy by comparison, ask himself now and then whether of these two he would prefer to be." — *W. Tuckwell*.

From an Underwood stereograph.

Fords of the Jordan.

10. **And Elisha sent a messenger unto him.** "The conduct of Elisha was not prompted by fear of defilement by leprosy, or by a desire to mark more clearly the miracle about to be performed, least of all by spiritual pride. The spiritual pride of a Jew would have found other expression, and, in general, those who cherish spiritual pride are scarcely proof against such visits as this of Naaman. Naaman was a proud man. He had been accustomed to receive a great deal of deference. Naaman wished to be treated like a great man that happened to be a leper; Elisha treated him like a leper that happened to be a great man. Naaman's pride and confidence in his wealth and high standing must be broken. Elisha wished to efface himself completely, and to fix the leper's thoughts on the one truth that, if healing was granted to him, it was due to the gift of God, not to thaumaturgy or arts of man." — *Rev.*

11. But Nā'-ă-măn was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12. Are not Ăb'-ă-năh and Phär'-păr, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

James Hastings, D.D. All of Naaman's lifelong training in heathenism would cause him to rely on surface shows and formal acts. No small part of the service Elisha was to do him was to turn his mind toward the great invisible realities of true religion. **Saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times.** "A severe test of obedience. If Elisha was dwelling in Samaria or in the western Gilgal (compare 2 Kings 2 : 1), he sends Naaman a journey of some twenty miles without even seeing him. The sevenfold bathing in Jordan adds to the severity of the test. If Naaman thought to be cured as a matter of course, because his king was more powerful than the king of Israel, he was completely undeceived. Elisha shows no respect of persons." — *Cambridge Bible.* **And thy flesh shall come again to thee.** "The scaly leprous scurf shall fall off and reveal clean flesh underneath." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **And thou shalt be clean.** The Hebrew is not a promise but a command, "Be thou clean."

11. **But Naaman was wroth and went away.** He thought himself insulted by the indifferent reception. **And said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me.** Naaman expected Elisha to hasten from his humble dwelling and bow before his greatness and pomp. "It was the sight of Naaman's shoe which made Elisha so high in the instep : with the stately he would be stately ; the rather because he did perceive that Naaman must be humbled before he could be healed, and the proud flesh first taken out of his heart ere the putrid flesh could be cured in his body." — *Thomas Fuller* (1608–1661).

Illustration. W. L. Riach compares Naaman with the attitude of modern men toward their physicians. If the physician diagnoses the case as we thought he would, we take his medicine with all faith and confidence ; but if his judgment differs from ours, as to the disease or the method of treating it, we are likely to throw his remedies away and send for another doctor.

And stand. In the attitude of prayer to his God. **And call on the name of Jehovah his God.** Naaman was expecting a solemn invocation, perhaps a series of magic charms. **And wave his hand over the place.** The part of Naaman's body where the leprosy was seated, implying that the disease had not advanced very far. **And recover the leper.** Naaman's dignity was hurt, but "purity is more essential than dignity. When one is ill, he does not go to his physician to be praised, but to be healed." — *Rev. J. Ross Stevenson, D.D.*

Illustration. "A preacher said that pride was the sin of the man who would not ride with the troop, or be one of the rank and file, but would take his own solitary and wilful way. He said it was as though the mill-stream were too dignified to go through the mill. I think that a sort of solitariness, a desiring to do things in one's own way, an incapacity of working with other people, is all a part of pride." — *A. C. Benson.*

Illustration. "How often those who loved life and saw before them a work to do in this world have prayed to be raised again from the bed of sickness ! Not so. The True Prophet led the sufferer down to Jordan. In the waters of death the perfect healing was found. This was the true recovery, to wash in Jordan, to climb up the bank, and stand on the eternal shore in the presence of the Lord himself." — *Sir W. Robertson Nicoll.*

12. **Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus.** "The region of Damascus is still watered by two main streams : the larger is the *Nahr Barada* (Abana), rising in Anti-Libanus and flowing eastward through the city, and the smaller the *Nahr El-A'waj* (Pharpar), running nearly parallel, some miles to the south. Both lose themselves in the marshes east of the city." — *New Century Bible.* They are fresh and beautiful streams, making Damascus an oasis of fertility. **Better than all the waters of Israel?** The Jordan is a turbid, sluggish river, sometimes clay-colored. **May I not wash in them, and be clean?** "In like manner the seeker for salvation cannot understand that it must just be faith by which he is to be cleansed. Are there not the waters of a deep and inward penitence, the streams of sincere humility, the loyalty of an inner love ? Why is it, pray, that faith is to be named above

13. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14. Then went he down, and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

---

these ? " — *Andrew Murray.* **So he turned and went away in a rage.** John Newton, in his poem based on this incident (*Olney Hymns*), uses Naaman's conduct as an illustration of how he himself, a sinner, proudly refused to bathe in the healing fountain which Christ opened on Calvary :

"At length I trial made,
When I had much endured;
The message I obeyed,
I washed, and I was cured.
Sinners, this healing fountain try,
Which cleaned a wretch so vile as I."

Illustration. " When the people of Israel, in the wilderness, were directed to look with faith to the serpent of brass, that they might be saved from death, they could not discover any connection between such an act and relief from the poison which was destroying life within them. But they did look and were saved, although it seemed a strange and irrational requirement." — *Charles Mason.*

" Naaman, the most popular man in Damascus, next to the king, when he heard God's message through the prophet, went away in a rage. And I fear that it may be said of some of us that we are too well satisfied to be saved. I think of one man, who objects to making a public profession of faith lest he might be criticised for inconsistency. Is not that the pride and self-consideration of a Naaman ? I think of another who has his plans all made for being a Christian under certain favorable conditions. Is not that, too, the calculating spirit of this fine gentleman of the olden times, who wished to make terms with God ? " — *Rev. J. Ross Stevenson, D.D.*

" We have all to take the lowest place before He stoops to bless us. Pride vanishes when the agonies of a lingering sickness are upon us, when death hangs threatening over the life we love best, when the last enemy is knocking at our own door. We are equal then ; and we are always equal in the sight of the great King." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

III. **JEHOVAH, THE ONE GOD**, vs. 13–19. Perhaps Naaman's servants were angry at the slight to their master, but if so, at least one of them had a cool head and could look at the matter wisely.

13. **And his servant came near, and spake unto him.** Even an inferior man, if he is not blinded by pride and passion, can see the truth more clearly than a great man that is not humble. This servant, at this time, was a far wiser man than his eminent master. **And said, My father.** It was indeed fortunate for Naaman that his servant was not afraid to expostulate with him, and that he loved him enough to call him " my father." No one can know when he may need even the humblest, and this thought, if nothing higher, should make us friends with all men. **If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing.** Had set him a hard task, such as to build a great temple to Jehovah. " Naaman's fundamental mistake consisted in his attempt to decide at all how the prophet should work the miracle of his cure." — *Canon Liddon.* **Wouldest thou not have done it?** " We sell our souls every day for such contemptible things ; such a small outlay would buy us eternal life." — *Alexander Whyte.*

14. **Then went he down.** Down more than a thousand feet into the deep valley of the Jordan ; down also into the valley of humiliation. " Humility is the first sign of a healthy spiritual state." — *Geikie.* **And dipped himself seven times in the Jordan.** He followed the prescription of the man of God exactly, with childlike faith and obedience. **And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child.** " Naaman wanted to do something great, and what impresses one profoundly is this : he did something great according to the gospel rule of simplicity : ' He that humbleth himself shall be exalted ' ; and the exaltation of this distinguished nobleman is to be seen — not in his position of command, which left him a leper, but in his lowly act of obedience, which left him clean as a little child." — *Rev. J. Ross Stevenson, D.D.* **And he was clean.** " All this, and more that follows, is history doubly interesting because it grew out of the kind wish and word of a despised captive, too poor to buy her own liberty and too obscure to be called by any name." — *Theron Brown.*

Immediately after the miracle Naaman returned to Elisha, though he was one-

fourth of the way home. He was full of gratitude, like the one leper out of the ten that returned — not far from this place — to give thanks to Jesus for his healing. The twenty miles (if that was the distance) between the Jordan and Elisha's home must have been a short and joyful journey for the Syrian general's renewed body and happy spirit.

This time Naaman did not expect the prophet to come out and stand humbly before him, but he entered the cottage and stood humbly before the man of God. Gladly he made acknowledgment that Jehovah was the one God in all the earth. He had made trial of the gods of heathenism, and they had been deaf to his prayers. Jehovah had proved himself by what he had done for him.

Now was the time for Naaman to give Elisha the rich present which he had brought from Syria as reward for his cure, but he pressed it upon Elisha in vain. The prophet's refusal was emphatic, and was enforced by a solemn oath : " As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none." Here was indeed a new kind of prophet ! for we may be sure that Naaman had not found the priests of heathendom reluctant to receive gifts. Elisha was a poor man, but he was too rich to need Naaman's gold. He had taught the Syrian that Jehovah was not to be moved by rank or human power ; it was equally necessary to teach him that divine gifts are not to be purchased with money.

Naaman next asked humbly for as much of Israel's soil as two mules could carry, — earth which, surrounded and held up by stones, would make the nucleus of an altar to the true God in a heathen land. Thenceforth, the general promised, he would offer sacrifice to Jehovah alone. " He had formerly despised the waters of Israel ; he now desires its dust and stones." — *Cambridge Bible*. Every time Naaman looked at this earth he would be reminded of his wonderful cure, his heart would go out in thanksgiving, and his loyalty to Jehovah would be quickened.

This request (which we may be sure Elisha granted) reminded Naaman of some of the difficulties that would attend the practice of his new religion. He was obliged to attend Ben-hadad as he went to worship in the temple of Rimmon at Damascus. Rimmon, as the storm-god, was a malevolent deity ; as the rain-god, he was a kindly god. Hadad was one of his names, and Ben-hadad was named after him. He may have been the tutelary deity of Damascus.

Naaman's perplexity was this : should he attend Ben-hadad when he worshipped in the temple of Rimmon, and bow with his royal master before the idol ? " Go in peace," answered Elisha, doubtless with a cheery smile. It was the ordinary " Good-by," and it did not explicitly permit Naaman to make this compromise, but it allowed it by not forbidding it.

It speaks well for Naaman that he raised the question at all. Most men in his position would have thought that they were doing remarkably well to take up this new religion in private, and make no outward profession that would jeopardize their standing in a heathen land. But Naaman had far too good a conscience and too keen a mind for such paltering with the truth.

Regarding this passage Dean Farrar thought that Elijah would never have permitted Naaman to make this compromise, and that the only rule to follow is to have no complicity with evil whatever. Rev. W. L. Watkinson, however, cites Paul's declaration (1 Cor. 8 : 1–13) that " an idol is nothing in the world," and adds, " The process of reasoning by which the apostle justified the Christians who ate meat offered to idols would excuse Naaman bowing in the house of Rimmon and justify the judgment of the prophet. Naaman's continuance with the Syrian gave the true religion a standing in an idolatrous court," and Christians also are often compelled to choose between an association with the ungodly which keeps them continually on guard, or an uncompromising isolation which destroys their influence over the ungodly. In such cases the only safety is whole-hearted obedience to the guidance of God's Spirit.

" Following any questionable course of conduct always (1) degrades the conscience ; (2) weakens the moral power ; (3) hampers spiritual aspirations." — *Principal Rowlands*.

Henry van Dyke, in his noble drama, *The House of Rimmon*, when Elisha says, " Go in peace," makes Naaman reply, " Thou hast not answered me, — may I bow down ? " Elisha's response is :

> "The answer must be thine. The heart that knows
> The perfect peace of gratitude and love,
> Walks in the light and needs no other rule.
> When next thou comest into Rimmon's House
> Thy heart will tell thee how to go in peace."

Dr. van Dyke has Naaman defy Rimmon in his temple, and finally marry the Hebrew maiden.

IV. GEHAZI'S LEPROSY, vs. 20–27. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, could not see all that wealth leaving his master's gate without seizing some of it. He slipped out of the house by a back way, and ran after Naaman, who stopped his chariot when he saw him. The great man, who a little while before had thought it beneath him to enter Elisha's cottage, now humbly descends from his chariot to meet Elisha's servant. The lie which Gehazi told, that two theological students had arrived and that Elisha would be glad of a talent of silver and two changes of raiment for *them*, probably did not deceive the shrewd Syrian. He probably took it as an intimation that the prophet would not object to a reward if it were given in a delicate, roundabout way. Gratefully, however, he gave Gehazi twice as much as he asked, and proceeded on his journey with a less exalted idea of the religion of Jehovah than he had had before.

Gehazi hid his spoil and returned with an innocent face to his master, only to be asked where he had been. The wretched man added a lie to his other sin, but it did not avail, for Elisha was a seer. Swiftly the penalty was invoked, and with Naaman's goods Gehazi received Naaman's leprosy. He had entered the house a vigorous, exultant young man. "He went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." It was one of the most terrible tragedies of Scripture.

Gehazi was the trusted companion of Elisha, destined doubtless to succeed him, as Elisha himself had succeeded Elijah. Gehazi's fall is like that of Demas, who, as Paul said, forsook his high calling because he "loved this present world." It is like that of Ananias and Sapphira, whose love of money brought about their death. He betrayed his master for money, as Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver. He may have repented and have been cured, as would be indicated by his converse with the king (2 Kings 8 : 5) — unless this incident belongs to an earlier period of the history ; but he was no longer the trusted and honored attendant of Elisha.

"Gehazi's story tells us that men may pursue an outwardly religious course all the time with a worldly mind, and bids us look narrowly to our own secret aims and wishes, and pray earnestly for their renewal by that Spirit who alone can save us from such a fall as Gehazi's, by making them heavenly and holy." — *E. J. Hasell.*

LESSON IX. — February 26.

ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS. — 2 Kings 6 : 8–23.

PRINT vs. 8–17.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, And delivereth them.* — Ps. 34 : 7.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 34 : 1–8.
Reference Material : Dan. 6 : 1–23 ; Heb. 1 : 14 ; 11 : 27.
Primary Topic : God Takes Care of Elisha.
Lesson Material : 2 Kings 6 : 8–23. Print vs. 8–17.
Memory Verse : He will give his angels charge over thee. Ps. 91 : 11.
Junior Topic : Elisha and the Armies of Jehovah.
Lesson Material : 2 Kings 6 : 8–23. Print vs. 8–17.
Memory Verses : Ps. 34 : 6, 7.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : Our Unseen Defenders.
Topic for Young People and Adults : What Faith in the Unseen Can Do for Us.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in the following way of presenting this lesson. Make a simple map of Dothan and the region around it. Write on slips of paper a series of questions on the events of the lesson and fasten these to the map in two concentric circles around Dothan. Those relating to the Syrians will form the outer circle and those relating to Elisha and his servant will form the inner circle. Let each slip end in an arrow-shaped tip, all the tips of the outer circle pointing inward and those of the inner circle pointing outward. The questions will be numbered in the order in which the pupils are to detach them from the map one by one, read them aloud, and then answer them.

The Older Classes will add interest to the lesson by obtaining definite reports on "what faith in the unseen can do" for those in different walks of life. The pupils may be asked to interview Christian business men, teachers, workingmen, lawyers, doctors, housewives, etc., asking each to tell how the unseen realities of religion — God, Christ, the angels, heaven — help them in their work. Bring these reports to the class session, and also, whenever possible, obtain the services of the workers themselves to relate their own experiences.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Probably in the reigns of Jehoram, king of Israel, and Ben-hadad II., king of Syria. About B.C. 895 (Beecher).

Place. — Damascus. Dothan, about ten miles north of Samaria.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Phillips Brooks's *New Starts in Life.* Watkinson's *The Supreme Conquest.* Greenhough's *Half-Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery.* Vaughan's *Plain Words on Christian Living.* Liddon's *Sermons to the People.* Banks's *The Christ Dream.* Hepworth's *Herald Sermons, First Series.* Whiton's *The Law of Liberty.* Woolsey's *Religion of the Present and of the Future.* Newton's *Olney Hymns.* Lowrie's *The Prophet Elisha.* Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible* and *Greater Men and Women of the Bible.* Müller's *Devotional Hours with the Bible.* Maclaren's *Expositions.*

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Stories of angels in the Old Testament.
Stories of angels in the New Testament.
Bible instances of one or a few overcoming many.
Bible teachings on the safety of God's children.
Bible mentions of early rising.
Applications of this lesson to the life of to-day.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Elisha's Unseen Defenders, and Ours.

I. THE DEFENCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT, vs. 8–13.
   The peril of the nation.
   Elisha's supernatural insight.
   Israel's safety and Syria's perplexity.

II. THE DEFENCE OF THE ANGELIC HOST, vs. 14–17.
   The seeming peril of Elisha.
   The fear of Elisha's servant.
   The real safety of Elisha.

III. THE DEFENCE OF KINDNESS, vs. 18–23.
   The blinded Syrians.
   "Shall I smite them?"
   "The Syrians came no more."

8. Now the king of Syria was warring against Israel; and he took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

9. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are coming down.

10. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of; and he saved himself there, not once nor twice.

I. **THE DEFENCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT**, vs. 8–13. "This whole story is a panorama of pictures worthy of the greatest painter's skill. The writer's purpose is to impress upon us the triumphant might of single-handed faith against all the unrighteous forces that can be brought against it. The writer brightens the whole narrative with touches of gentle humor. He satirizes brute force; he pricks the vanity of self-consequential personages; he makes us laugh at the unequal combat which ends ignominiously for the stronger side." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

8. **Now the king of Syria.** Probably Ben-hadad II. **Was warring against Israel.** In our last lesson we found him sending Jehoram a friendly letter, and asking a favor; but with two nations hating each other as Israel and Syria did, a few years would easily incite new hostilities. **And he took counsel with his servants**; that is, with the leading officers of his army. **Saying, in such and such a place shall be my camp** Or, according to another text, "Let us set an ambush."

9. **And the man of God.** Elisha, the chief spokesman for Jehovah at that time. **Sent unto the king of Israel.** Probably Jehoram, son of Ahab. **Saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place.** Elisha disapproved of Jehoram (2 Kings 3 : 13; 5 : 8; 6 : 32); but the prophet was a patriot, and in the interest of his country he warned the wicked ruler of the country. **For thither the Syrians are coming down.** That is, the Syrians are hidden on the heights above, ready to rush down on the Hebrews as they pass below.

10. **And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of.** He sent scouts there to reconnoitre and discover whether the Syrians were actually in ambush there or not. "It is a good thing when God's servants are not afraid to make their voices heard in politics, and a safeguard for a

11. And the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?

12. And one of his servants said, Nay, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

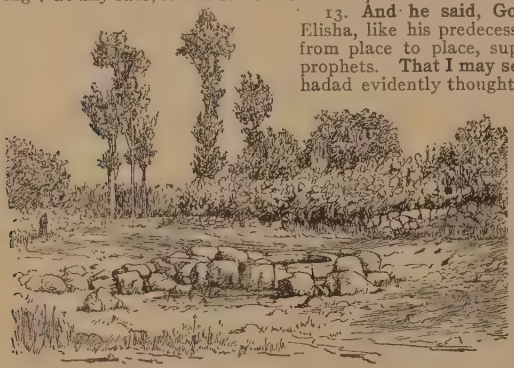
13. And he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dō'-thăn.

---

nation when their counsels are taken. The quiet prophet was more to Israel than an army." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **And he saved himself there, not once nor twice**; that is, three or more times. He saved himself by not going there, nor falling into the snare which the Syrians had prepared for him.

11. **And the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing.** Distressed, agitated; the word is used of the "tempestuous" sea in Jonah 1 : 11. **And he called his servants.** As before, the officers of his army, who knew of his plans. **And said unto them, Will ye not show me.** Ben-hadad appeals to their patriotism to inform on one another, if they knew who was treacherous. "Telling tales" is always disagreeable, but it may become an imperative duty. **Which of us is for the king of Israel?** The implication is that, being for the king of Israel, some one of the followers of the king of Syria had betrayed the Syrian plans to him.

12. **And one of his servants said, Nay, my lord, O king.** A strong, indignant protest: "No! It is not as you suppose! There is no traitor among us, O king!" **But Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel.** *The* prophet, as if there were no other, towering head and shoulders above them all. **Telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.** "A proverbial expression for a secret place (Eccl. 10 : 20)." — *Cambridge Bible.* It may have been Naaman who was speaking; at any rate, it was some one well acquainted with Elisha's powers.



Old Well at Dothan.

13. **And he said, Go and see where he is.** Elisha, like his predecessor, Elijah, moved about from place to place, supervising the sons of the prophets. **That I may send and fetch him.** Ben-hadad evidently thought that if he could capture Elisha, he could put a stop to his mysterious work, quite forgetting that one who could learn the Syrian plans at a distance, could also at a distance inform Israel of them. **And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.** Dothan was ten miles north of Samaria, in a plain overlooked by hills on the north and the south of it. The caravan route from Damascus to Egypt passed through this plain, and there Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37 : 17). The modern name is *Tell Dothan,* and the place is a hill covered with ruins, a large spring flowing from its base.

II. **THE DEFENCE OF THE ANGELIC HOST,** vs. 14–17. What follows is "just such a miracle as befits the purpose of the gospel considered as an unveiling of the unseen world to the soul of man. It especially anticipates such miracles of our Lord as that by which he healed the man born blind, in which at one and the same time he gave the gift of natural sight and the higher gift of spiritual sight." — *Canon H. P. Liddon.*

14. **Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host.** What folly, to think he could capture God's prophet by such means! "His action in this matter is a signal illustration of the ordinary blindness and ignorance of worldly men con-

14. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16. And he answered, Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them.

17. And Elisha prayed, and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

cerning spiritual things." — *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.* **And they came by night**, so as to take the prophet by surprise; as if he who had known supernaturally of Ben-hadad's other expeditions would not know of this one also! **And encompassed the city about**, forming a cordon that Elisha could not get through — or so they foolishly thought.

15. **And when the servant of the man of God was risen early.** Perhaps some noise of the Syrians aroused him; perhaps he was awakened by a friend who had discovered them. **And gone forth.** Out of Elisha's lowly abode. **Behold, a host with horses and chariots was round about the city.** Three kinds of troops — footmen, horsemen, soldiers in chariots. "Behold" indicates the awe with which the servant beheld the hostile array. **And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?** "No situation could apparently be more hopeless; but no such terror communicates itself to the mind that has long been stayed upon God." — *Dean C. J. Vaughan.*

16. **And he answered, Fear not.** Thus King Hezekiah quieted the fears of the people when Jerusalem was surrounded by the overwhelming forces of Sennacherib (2 Chron. 32 : 6–8). How often these words were upon the lips of our Lord! **For they that are with us are more than they that are with them.** The business, the pleasures, the trials of life are very real, but no more real than the unseen God and his unseen agents, watching us and guarding us. All our acts and thoughts are open to him, and we are never alone. What a terror to the wicked, what joy and strength to the good! Compare Elisha's confidence with that of David, Ps. 3 : 6; 27 : 3. "The true and only conqueror of reasonable fear is still more reasonable trust." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

17. **And Elisha prayed.** "Prayer is the means of passing from a life of sight to a life of faith." — *Dean C. J. Vaughan.* Our own prayer for ourselves; sometimes, as here, the prayers of others for us. **And said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.** "The prophet's prayer was not that God would send a host to guard him, but that the young man's eyes might be opened to see the host that was already there." — *J. R. Miller.* Elisha did not need the actual vision of the angelic host, for God and the unseen world were very real to him at all times; but his servant, having less faith, had need of the vision.

"It lies around us like a cloud, —
A world we do not see;
Yet the sweet closing of an eye
May bring us there to be." — *Harriet Beecher Stowe.*

And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man. As the eyes of the two men of Emmaus were opened to the Lord with whom they had been walking and talking. "The true unveiling of the human eye, the true sight that gives courage to a human heart, is the sight of the Divine Father standing above all our struggling life, looking down into it with love, with pity, and ready to strike down our enemies the moment they grow too strong for us." — *Phillips Brooks.*

Illustration. "The same thing had occurred in an earlier age to Balaam. His eyes were opened, and he saw an angel stopping his path — an angel who was there, but whom his natural eye had not seen. It was like the discovery, by a powerful telescope, of a planet unseen before, but of the existence of which an astronomer might have known by calculations that could not fail him." — *Canon H. P. Liddon.*

And he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire. A splendid array such as swept Elijah to heaven (2 Kings 2 : 11), only greatly multi-

plied. "They were unearthly powers, who assumed a form by which they could make an impression of truth on the distrustful, fleshly mind of the prophet's servant. . . . If there are hosts of foes of God, there is a God of hosts above them." — *President Theodore D. Woolsey, of Yale.* The heavenly powers took the same form as the earthly powers of Syria, but glowed with a heavenly radiance, and thus manifested their supernatural origin. **Round about Elisha.** "Elisha's servant could see the horses and chariots that were against them, but he could not see the horses and chariots of fire that were for them. We can see material values, but not spiritual forces. We can see the riches of Wall Street, but not the 'unsearchable riches' of Christ." — *Rev. Edgar W. Work, D.D.*

Elisha's Heavenly Defenders.

"Almighty God, as now we raise
Our longing eyes in hope to thee,
Anointed, may our wondering gaze
Thy chariots and thy horsemen see.

"Let faith revive, let courage new
The vision of thy hosts impart;
That all thou willest we may do
With steadfast hands and holy heart."
— *A. S. Dyer.*

ANGELIC DEFENDERS. "We cannot separate ourselves from the great human conviction that beside the supreme personal life of God, which is the source of all existence, there are other spiritual beings of many varied orders, who do his will, who help his children, and are the emanations of his life in other worlds as man is here in this grosser world of flesh and blood. . . . We do not fear the danger where we see the defence." — *Phillips Brooks.*

"How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succor us that succor want! . . .
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
And all for love, and nothing for reward."
— *Spenser's Faery Queen, II., viii.*

Illustration. Because men cannot often see the angels, it is argued that they do not exist. This is as stupid as the remark of an English countryman after hearing a lecture on the great comet of October, 1858. The lecturer had explained the enormous length of the comet's tail, so many millions of miles. "I saw the comet myself," sneered this countryman, "and *its tail was just four feet long.*"

"'To have no sense of the invisible,' said a great writer, 'is the ruin of art.' To have no sense of the invisible, it may most certainly be added, is the ruin of virtue." — *Canon H. P. Liddon.*

"Whether we are privileged to see what Elisha's attendant saw or not, if we feel sure that he really saw what is recorded we may be content to remain blind. We do not care so much to see heaven for ourselves as to be certain that somebody has seen it, either prophet or servant. If heaven is there, we ask no more. . . . The affirmation ennobles all things; the denial leaves us wringing our hands in mute despair." — *George H. Hepworth.*

Illustration. "Moses defying the might of Egypt; Gideon with his little regiment charging the vast army of the Midianites; Elijah in lonely grandeur challenging the furious rabble of Baal's prophets; Daniel setting at nought the king's princes, nobles, and hungry lions of Babylon; Peter and John scornfully resisting the brow-beating magistrates; Stephen and Paul facing with majestic serenity the mobs that stoned them; and, above all, the great Cross-bearer, treading his winepress alone and claiming the world as his own though it was all against him — magnificent figures were all these; yet it was simply their belief in the unseen forces which made them what they were. They saw the fiery chariots and the armies of heaven." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

Illustration. "Many of us need what Elisha's young man needed, the opening of eyes. 'They seeing, see not,' was our Lord's description of all such. Some one spoke incredulously to Turner about his pictures. 'I never saw such sunsets,' he said. 'Don't you wish you could?' was the artist's reply." — *Rev. Edgar W. Work, D.D.*

Illustration. "The one impregnable fortress in this world is a perfectly sincere and honest soul whose reliance is in God. Earth has no impregnable fortress. For many years the old French city of Quebec was believed to be an impregnable fortress; but the intrepid Wolfe, nursing the last spark of life in his enfeebled body, led his little army up the rugged walls of granite to the Heights of Abraham and accomplished its overthrow. But there is one fortress the walls of which no assaulting column can scale and whose garrison cannot be starved out by any siege — a frank, sincere soul whose trust is in God." — *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.*

"When Satan and his host appear,
Like him of old, I faint and fear;
Like him, by faith, with joy I see
A greater host engaged for me.

"The saints espouse my cause by prayer,
The angels make my soul their care;
Mine is the promise sealed with blood,
And Jesus lives to make it good."

— *John Newton.*

III. **THE DEFENCE OF KINDNESS**, vs. 18–23. Quietly the prophet waited until the Syrian troops came rushing down from the hills, swept through Dothan, and surrounded his little cottage. In this terrible emergency Elisha, as always, had recourse to prayer. He asked God to smite his enemies with blindness, meaning, evidently, blindness of the understanding rather than of the eyes; "illusion," Hastings translates it.

Elisha's prayer was answered. He ventured among them, as did Alfred into the camps of the Danes. When he spoke boldly to the Syrians and told them that they had lost their way and were not in the right city, but that he would conduct them to the man whom they were seeking, God led them to yield to the trick and follow Elisha's guidance ten miles southward till they were in Samaria, the capital of the country.

"There is nothing improbable in this story, if we acknowledge that Elisha possessed beyond most men self-possession and readiness of speech and action. The real difficulty of the account is the moral difficulty: How could a prophet use this deceit? How could he ask his God to aid him in it? The answer to which is that to deceive an enemy was considered by no one at this time to be wrong, and if the device was not wrong, there was no reason against praying for divine aid in carrying it out. Elisha in this point was only not in advance of his age. Compare 1 Kings 22 : 20–22." — *Prof. William Emery Barnes, D.D., in The Cambridge Bible.*

In his searching sermon on this passage Rev. James M. Whiton, Ph.D., gives instances in which duty might call for deception, as when a physician deceives a sick man in order to save his life, or when the agent of justice, for the sake of society, deceives a criminal in order to discover his wrongdoing. The enforcement of prohibition has offered many instances in point. Dr. Whiton thus sums up the matter: "Deception is never right unless the supreme law of benevolence makes it for the time a positive duty. However extreme the case, it is never a duty unless conscience requires it as such. Amid all necessities the supreme necessity is a pure conscience."

Illustration. "Elisha misled that he might deliver; our peril lies with treacherous guides, who mislead that they may destroy. A few years ago a vessel was wrecked while entering one of the Australian ports. The cause of the catastrophe was not apparent, and investigation eventually showed that the pilot had become practically blind. False guides in matters of conduct dog our steps. They address the young man or woman who has been religiously trained, 'This is not the way' — the path that leads through the Sunday school, the church of God, the Young Men's Christian Association; and they beckon to the path that runs through the theatre, saloon, gambling hell, race-course, and Vanity Fair generally." — *Rev. William L. Watkinson, D.D.*

Doubtless during the ten-mile march Elisha had sent word (perhaps by his servant) to the king of Israel, so that when the Syrians arrived he had a cordon of warriors ready to receive them. Then Elisha prayed once more, and the Syrians saw where they were, and understood in an instant the trick that had been played upon them.

"Is not this the idea of life that the Bible gives us, as if we were blind men walking in the midst of a great city, hearing its noise, feeling its jostling, and now and then in some peculiar moments of our life opening our eyes, catching one sudden flash of the movement that is going on around us, and then shutting them again and taking the

moment's sight back with us into the darkness, to ponder over, and too often, by and by, to come to doubt about whether we really saw it." — *Phillips Brooks.*

Illustration. In her wonderful little book, *Twenty Minutes of Reality*, Margaret Prescott Montague describes how one day, as she sat convalescing from a sickness, suddenly for twenty minutes she saw the world with marvelous clearness, and all the familiar persons, sounds, and things around her took on new and glorious meanings and splendor. Since then, for a single briefer period, she has repeated the experience, and numerous correspondents have written her of similar revelations to momentarily clarified spirits.

The king of Israel addressed Elisha reverently, "My father," and eagerly asked permission to smite the foes thus strangely delivered into his hands. That he should wait for this consent shows how strong was the prophet's influence over his royal master. Doubtless the king expected to be commanded to destroy the enemies of his country utterly, but Elisha had a better way. "Why!" said he in effect; "you would not kill those whom you had taken captive with sword and bow; how much less those whom Jehovah has delivered into your hands without your striking a blow!" So Elisha had the Syrians fed with bread and water, a great feast, and then sent them back home. They had experienced in a signal way the mighty power of the Hebrews' God, and they owed their own lives to the kindness of the Hebrews. No wonder the striking narrative ends, "and the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." "Nineteen centuries of so-called Christianity have not brought 'Christendom' to practise Elisha's recipe for finishing a war." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Illustration. Of the conduct of the British toward the defeated Boers the following is said by A. Conan Doyle in *The Great Boer War*: "In the hollow where the Boer tents had stood, amid the lagered wagons of the vanquished, under a murky sky and a constant drizzle of rain, the victors spent the night. Sleep was out of the question, for all night the fatigue parties were searching the hillside and the wounded were being carried in. Camp-fires were lit and soldiers and prisoners crowded around them, and it is pleasant to recall that the warmest corner and the best of their rude fare were always reserved for the downcast Dutchmen, while words of rude praise and sympathy softened the pain of defeat. It is the memory of such things which may in happier days be more potent than all the wisdom of statesmen in welding our two races into one."

This is the third defence of God's people of which we are told in this lesson, and it is the greatest, for it is the defence of the Christian spirit of love, the spirit of forgiveness which our Redeemer came to illustrate in his life and to implant in the hearts of men. In all our perils we may have the defence of wisdom which the Holy Spirit will impart; the defence of the heavenly powers, our guardian angels; and the defence of brotherly kindness. Nor is the last less supernatural than the others, for only as the Holy Spirit of love dwells in our hearts can we show forth such love among men.

LESSON X. — March 5.

JEHOVAH'S MERCY TO A HEATHEN CITY. — Jonah 3 : 1—4 : 11.

PRINT Jonah 3 : 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* — ISA. 55 : 7.

Devotional Reading: Isa. 55 : 1–9.
Reference Material: Ps. 117; 145; Isa. 45 : 20–25; 49 : 5–7; Jonah 1 : 1—2 : 10; Mal. 1 : 10, 11; John 3 : 16.
Primary Topic: GOD SENDS JONAH ON AN ERRAND.
Lesson Material: Jonah 3 : 1—4 : 11. Print Jonah 3 : 1–10.
Memory Verse: God is love. 1 John 4 : 8.
Junior Topic: HOW GOD SPARED A WICKED CITY.
Lesson Material: Jonah 3 : 1—4 : 11. Print Jonah 3 : 1–10.
Memory Verse: Ps. 103 : 8.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: JONAH'S MISSIONARY ADVENTURE.
Topic for Young People and Adults: THE MISSIONARY TEACHING OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in the lesson at once if it is set forth as an account of an errand from which Jonah ran away. Bring out the map and use it while telling the story. Show a map of your own county and lay off, with your town as the center, a square fifteen miles each way, to give some idea of the size of Nineveh. Do not fail, even in the youngest classes, to emphasize the thought of missions, God's love for all men.

The Older Classes may divide the lesson story into three acts, to be related by three members of the class in turn, each to be followed by another who will set forth the teachings of that act in the drama. See the three subdivisions below. We are not free from the spirit of exclusiveness shown by Jonah. Make the lesson a strong plea for love of all nations and races, and for the practical helpfulness by which alone that love may be shown.

In All Classes let the teacher keep the lesson from becoming a debate over the great fish, and lead it to the great meaning of the book.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jonah probably prophesied just before the reign of Jeroboam II., or early in that reign, about B.C. 830. He was contemporary with Hosea and Amos or even earlier — perhaps the very earliest of the prophets whose writings we possess.

Place. — Jonah was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom, living at Gath-hepher, a town of lower Galilee, not far from Nazareth. Christ would have special interest in his book. Jonah's tomb is still shown in Gath-hepher.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Jonah, especially George Adam Smith in *The Expositor's Bible*, Perowne in *The Cambridge Bible*, Horton in *The New Century Bible*, Bewer in *The International Critical Commentary*, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Butler's *Bible Work*, Parker's *People's Bible*, etc. *Books on the prophets* by Eiselen, Fowler, Duhm, Petrie, Farrar, etc. MacArthur's *Quick Truths in Quaint Texts*, First Series. Whiton's *New Points to Old Texts*. Spurgeon's *Sermons*, Vols. III. and VIII. Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*. Cox's *Expositions*, Vol. II. Holden's *The Gospel of the Second Chance*. Stimson's *The New Things of God*. Vaughan's *Temple Sermons*. Talmage's *Sermons*, First and Third Series. Chapters on Jonah in Matheson's *Representative Men*, Whyte's *Bible Characters*, Wharton's *Famous Men of the Old Testament*, Geikie's *Old Testament Characters*, Amos R. Wells's *Bible Miniatures*. John Newton's "The Gourd" in *Olney Hymns*. Other poems by Quarles, Richard Wilton, John Henry Newman, Orlando T. Dobbin, Herbert Kynaston. *Jonah of Gath-hepher*, by Edward A. Marshall, an interesting story. A sprightly treatment, in three chapters, in Louis Albert Banks's *Hero Tales from Sacred Story*. *Light on the Story of Jonah*, by Henry Clay Trumbull (concerning the Assyrian god Dagan, half man and half fish). Townsend's *The Story of Jonah*. Dean Hodges on "The Cattle of Nineveh" in *The Heresy of Cain*. Adeney on Jonah in *Men of the Old Testament*. Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Illustrations throughout the Bible of Jewish pride and exclusiveness.
What is known about Jonah.
Jonah and Christ.
Acted parables in the Old Testament and New Testament.
Literary characteristics of the book of Jonah.
Missionary teachings in the Old Testament.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Missionary Teaching of the Book of Jonah.

I. JONAH AND THE STORM, Jonah, chapters 1, 2.
- The prophet's orders.
- The prophet's disobedience.
- The prophet's punishment.
- The prophet's prayer.

II. JONAH AND THE CITY, Jonah 3 : 1–10.
- The second command.
- The terrifying message.
- The city's repentance.
- The city's pardon.

III. JONAH AND THE GOURD, Jonah 4.
- Jonah's anger.
- Jonah's waiting.
- The symbol of the gourd.
- Missionary teachings of Jonah.

I. **JONAH AND THE STORM**, Jonah, chapters 1, 2. THE BOOK OF JONAH is unique among the prophetical writings of the Old Testament, being a story and not a prophecy, and being interwoven with miraculous elements. Jonah, however, who may have been the author of the book, was a historical character, named with full particulars in 2 Kings 14 : 25. If, as some scholars think, the book of Jonah is not true history but merely a religious allegory, it is hard to see why a Jewish writer should write such an allegory, placing in so unfavorable a light one of the Hebrew prophets. Our Lord himself (Matt. 12 : 39, 40) certainly believed Jonah to be genuine history, or he would not have made Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish a parallel to his own three days in the grave, or compared the repentance of the Ninevites with the failure of the men of his own time to repent. Surely we are not "to suppose him to say that imaginary persons who at the imaginary preaching of an imaginary prophet repented in imagination, shall rise up in the day of judgment and condemn the actual impenitence of those his actual hearers." — *Perowne*.

THE OBJECT OF THE BOOK OF JONAH is not to teach repentance, though the repentance first of Jonah and then of the Ninevites is prominent in the book, and even God is said to "repent" of the punishment he had intended for the great city. This teaching, however, is subordinate to the fundamental lesson of the book, to which each chapter is related and of which the last chapter is the climax, the great lesson of God's love for all men. The book is a stinging rebuke to Jewish pride and exclusiveness, which held that all other nations were outside God's family, and that men could be saved only as they became Jews. One of the greatest and most wonderful things in the Bible is the appearance of this powerful evangelical book in the midst of the Old Testament writings, and one of the earliest of the prophecies. It is saturated with the spirit of Christ, the universal love of Calvary. It might have been written by the Apostle to the Gentiles. It is one of the chief missionary books of all time.

JONAH THE PROPHET (his name means "the dove") was the son of Amittai, and lived in Gath-hepher, a town of Galilee. He dwelt near the great highway which, running north and south, bound Palestine to Egypt and to Assyria. He was in the current of world events.

"Jonah occupied, in the kingdom of Jeroboam II., a place as important as that of Elisha had been before him. The splendid achievements by which his sovereign restored the ancient lustre of the arms of Israel are recorded as performed under his encouragement (2 Kings 14 : 25)." — *Rev. James M. Whiton, Ph.D.*

Headdress of King and Queen, Assyrian.

Jewish tradition says that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elijah raised to life, and also the boy who attended Elijah to the wilderness and the youth whom Elisha sent to anoint Jehu.

Knowledge came to him of the terrible wickedness of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, situated northeast across the Syrian desert and the rich plains of Mesopotamia. The Assyrians were a powerful, rich, rapacious, and cruel people, and their capital was one of the most magnificent cities the world has ever seen. God's Spirit laid upon Jonah the burden of Nineveh's sin, and the command to go thither and summon its multitudes to repentance.

Jonah's flight from what he felt to be his duty may not have been caused by cowardice, though it was indeed a perilous errand. "What could one man do," he may well have asked, "against the greatest and most wicked city of the world?" It was the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness that seizes upon all but the most valiant and faith-filled souls when confronted with the swarming millions of heathendom to-day, and the appalling missionary problems of the home-land.

Jonah fled in the opposite direction from his duty, westward toward Tarshish (Tartessus), an ancient mercantile city of the Phœnicians in southern Spain. That was the western extremity of the world known at that time. He went fifty miles from Gath-hepher to Palestine's sole seaport, Joppa, now Jaffa, one of the oldest cities in the world, but with a very poor harbor, and there took ship.

"He paid his fare all the way to Tarshish, but did not get the worth of his money. Neither does any one who turns his back on his duty and does that which is not right." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

The Mediterranean west of Palestine is subject to violent winds from the north and northwest called Levanters, because they spring from the Levant. Paul encountered these winds on his famous voyage to Rome (Acts 27 : 14, etc.). Such a storm attacked Jonah's vessel, and beat upon it so severely that it seemed likely to break in two. The Phœnician sailors were terrified, cried to their heathen gods, and lightened the ship by casting all movables into the sea — the same course that was pursued on Paul's ship (Acts 27 : 19).

"Those bales were probably the property of merchants in Tarshish and elsewhere. Because of one sinful man this cargo is thrown into the sea. One bad man destroys much good." — *Rev. Robert S. MacArthur, D.D.*

Through all this peril and confusion Jonah was soundly asleep below deck, not the sleep of peaceful innocence like Christ's in the storm, but the sleep of exhaustion after a long struggle. Noting this, the captain indignantly woke him up, asked him why he was asleep in such a time, and bade him call on his God, as all the others were calling upon theirs, that by their joint supplication they might win the divine mercy.

Finding their prayers unavailing, the heathen sailors came to the conclusion that the storm was sent upon them because they were carrying some great sinner at whom the gods were angry, and they cast lots to discover who it was, the lot falling on Jonah.

Illustration. "A story is told by Cicero (*De Nat. Deor.* III., 37) of Diagoras, how that when he was on a voyage, and the sailors, terrified by a storm which had befallen them, charged him with being the cause of it, he pointed to other vessels in the same plight with themselves, and asked them whether they thought that they too carried Diagoras. Horace, in a well-known passage (Hor. *Od. lib.* III. C. 2. 26–30), affirms that he would not suffer a man, who had provoked the anger of the gods, to put to sea in the same boat with him, because the innocent in such cases were not infrequently involved in a common punishment with the guilty. The truth which underlay this wide-spread conviction is taught us in its pure form in such histories as those of Achan (Josh. 7) and Jonathan (1 Sam. 14 : 36–46)." — *Cambridge Bible.*

The Phœnician sailors, though superstitious heathen, were fair and judicial enough to ask Jonah why he had offended his God, and what punishment he himself thought should be meted out to him in order that his God might be appeased. Calvin held that Jonah perceived the hand of God in all this, and felt that the sacrifice of his life was required to make amends for his disobedience, and that therefore he advised the sailors to cast him into the sea. The Phœnicians, however, were too merciful to do this until they had made one more effort to reach safety by hard rowing, but in vain. Even then they did not cast Jonah into the sea until they had prayed to Jehovah, that he would not lay upon them the guilt of slaying the innocent in case Jonah proved after all not to be the wrongdoer. Then they threw the prophet overboard. At once the storm ceased, and the sailors offered sacrifice to Jonah's God, and made vows of other offerings to be given him when they should come to land. This acknowledgment of Jehovah was the first missionary result of Jonah's experience.

"The parallel to the Lord's resurrection is deeper than the fact of a three-days' entombment. Jonah saved the ship by voluntarily dying; so Christ laid down his life and took it again. Those he saved were not Jews only, but Phœnicians, pagans, the world." — *New Century Bible.*

The Bible does not say that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, but by "a great fish," perhaps a shark. "The cachalot whale, which has been seen in the Mediterranean, can easily swallow a man, or even a small boat. Sharks have swallowed men, and vomited them out alive." Thus writes R. F. Horton, D.D., who, however, regards the entire story of the great fish as merely "the imaginative apparatus of a divine truth, — that God knows how to deliver his erring servants."

Jonah's three days and three nights in the belly of the fish paralleled and foreshadowed our Lord's three days and three nights in the grave (Matt. 12 : 40; 1 Cor. 15 : 4). His prayer (Jonah 2) of thanksgiving and trust, though it may have been formulated after leaving the fish, expresses his feelings when there, and is like the hymns of praise Paul and Silas sung in the Philippi prison. It is full of quotations and half-quotations from the Psalms, and shows that the prophet was saturated with the language of Hebrew devotion.

At the close of the three days and three nights, Jonah's discipline having done its work, the Lord answered Jonah's prayer by bidding the fish release Jonah, and the prophet was ejected upon dry land, doubtless near Joppa from which the ship had started, and from which it would be easy for him to travel back to Gath-hepher proclaiming the Lord's goodness all the way.

II. **JONAH AND THE CITY**, Jonah 3 : 1–10. "This is the tragedy of the book of Jonah, that a book which is made the means of one of the most sublime revelations of truth in the Old Testament should be known to most only for its connection with a whale." George Adam Smith prefaces his treatise on Jonah with this quotation; and it is true that whatever our interpretation of the book and of the tale of the great fish, the latter occupies only two verses of the book, and is quite subordinate to its main purpose, to which we now come.

1. **And the word of Jehovah.** An unmistakable intimation of God's will, as clear as if spoken by word of mouth. "The Lord comes to us as distinctly as ever he came to the old prophets. Have we a strong conviction of duty? That is the word of the

1. And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying,
2. Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.
3. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey.
4. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

Lord to our hearts." — *Joseph Parker.* **Came unto Jonah.** We do not know when, probably some weeks or months after his deliverance, after the prophet had digested the meaning of that wonderful event. **The second time.** This second commission, for which Jonah humbly waited, was a token that God had forgiven his prophet, as Christ's second commission of Peter after his resurrection was proof that Peter's denial of Christ was forgiven him. "It is always God's way to give men second chances; indeed, a second chance often renewed." — *Rev. J. Stuart Holden.*

2. **Arise.** Jonah had probably settled down in his home at Gath-hepher. **Go unto Nineveh.** Jehovah repeats his first command in almost the same words (Jonah 1 : 2). Man's disobedience does not annul God's law. **That great city.** "Nineveh was (as hinted by the Hebrew superlative used in verse 3, 'great to God,' or divinely great) the largest city of the world, and was the capital of the mightiest empire then existing, the Assyrian. This empire existed from 1500 to 600 before Christ. In its flourishing state, Nineveh was greater than Babylon. Its walls were a hundred feet high and of great breadth, having fifteen hundred towers each two hundred feet high. The compass of the enclosed city was sixty miles, or three days' journey. Great heaps of ruins at vast distances apart lie within the quadrilateral wall, which may still be recognized, marked by a series of mounds in a regular line scattered over the plain." — *J. G. Butler.* **And preach unto it.** Before it was "cry against it." Jonah's experience has given him a personal message. **The preaching that I bid thee.** The essence of an errand is not to go, but, having gone, to do and say what one is bidden to do and say. Preachers, Sunday-school teachers, prayer-meeting speakers, evangelists, missionaries, all Christians, are to speak, not their own words or thoughts, but what God bids them speak.

From Davis's Bible Dictionary.
Nineveh, the Great City.

3. **So Jonah arose.** "He was now as prompt to obey as formerly (Jonah 1 : 3) to flee." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **And went unto Nineveh.** A journey of more than five hundred miles, a very long and arduous journey in those days. **According to the word of Jehovah.** The heart of the message of the book of Jonah is obedience, and that is the heart of the missionary message at all times. We go because Christ says, "Go ye." **Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city.** Literally, "a city great to God," great even in the eyes of the Almighty. "Was" need not imply that Nineveh was destroyed before this book was written: it *was* great when Jonah visited it, and presented to him a great problem. **Of three days' journey,** probably in circuit. The mention of large numbers of cattle in Jonah 4 : 11 implies much open pasture land within the walls. Rawlinson estimated the area indicated by the ruins at 216 square miles.

4. **And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey.** "Not, perhaps, going straight on, but moving about among the more frequented streets, the market places,

5. And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

or other places of concourse to be found among the scattered population. Before he could finish one day's journey, the impression made by his words among the people was so great that he had no need to go farther." — *Speaker's Commentary.* **And he cried, and said.** So far as we are told his preaching consisted only of the few words that follow. The very brevity of his message would add to its stern power.

Illustration. "Simplicity is always impressive. They were four words which God caused to be written on the wall amid Belshazzar's impious revelry: *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.* We all remember the touching history of Jesus the son of Anan, an unlettered rustic, who, four years before the war, when Jerusalem was in complete peace and affluence, burst in on the people at the feast of tabernacles with one oft-repeated cry, 'A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four winds, a voice on Jerusalem and the temple, a voice on the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice on the whole people'; how he went about through all the lanes of the city, repeating, day and night, this one cry, and when scourged until his bones were laid bare, echoed every lash with 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem,' and continued as his daily dirge and his only response to daily good or ill treatment, 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem.' The magistrates and even the cold Josephus thought that there was something in it above nature." — *Pusey.*

Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. All faithful preachers and teachers will set forth the terror of the law as well as the mercy and love of God. Warnings are as necessary as promises. Jonah gave Nineveh forty days of grace, forty days in which to repent. No sinner can say that God has not given him every possible chance and incentive to turn from his evil way. We are not told that Jonah used his own marvelous experience as a sign to the people of Nineveh, a token of his own authority and an evidence of God's power and graciousness; but what better argument could he have found? Indeed, it may well be that the fame of the miracle had preceded him, and won a ready hearing for the prophet.

'Jonah at Nineveh

5. **And the people of Nineveh believed God.** It is well said that they believed God rather than that they believed Jonah, and shows that Jonah had done his work well, had hidden behind his message. The striking and prompt effect of Jonah's preaching was due (1) to the emotional susceptibility of Orientals, who are easily led to great outbursts of feeling; (2) the strangeness of Jonah's appearance, a foreigner from far away, commanding awe by his very courage and confidence in facing a great city alone; (3) the evident unselfishness of Jonah and the fervor of his appeal striking home to their consciences. **And they proclaimed a fast.** Fasting is a self-punishment, and so indicates humility and sorrow for sin. It also involves a purification of the body, which aids the purifying of the soul. Furthermore, it provides leisure from worldly cares, and time for spiritual meditation. In all ages fasting has been a recognized help in the religious life, and modern Christianity will make a mistake if it wholly abandons the practice. **And put on sackcloth.** This coarse, rough cloth was a token of sorrow, and wearing it indicated contrition, and also the hope that by afflicting the body they might obtain the compassion of God. **From the greatest of them even to the least of them.** Nobles and slaves, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, all were convicted of sin. As in every genuine revival, worldly distinctions perished, and all were simply sinners before God.

6. And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7. And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water;

8. But let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.

9. Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

6. **And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh.** Perhaps Shalmanezer III. In his secluded palace he would be among the last to be reached by this great popular movement. **And he arose from his throne,** which was richly adorned as became earth's most powerful monarch. **And laid his robe from him.** Assyrian kings were richly attired in elaborate flowing garments, with necklaces, earrings, armlets, and bracelets of great beauty. **And covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.** He proved himself a true leader of his people, excelling them in repentance and in submission to God.

7. **And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh.** He placed himself formally at the head of the movement, and required it to be universal. **By the decree of the king and his nobles.** The king of Assyria had absolute power, which was usually exercised; but in his new humbling he associates his nobles with him. **Saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.** "Beast" would include horses and mules, to which the sentence adds cattle and sheep. All are made to fast, that their calls of hunger and distress may add to the general mourning. **Let them not feed, nor drink water.** Lack of water would greatly increase the distress of the animals and men.

8. **But let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast.** Thus in state funerals the horses are covered with black trappings. **And let them cry mightily unto God.** Here, of course, the beasts are dropped from the account. **Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way.** It was not enough for them to repent; they must "do works meet for repentance." This salutary truth the Hebrew prophets constantly urged upon their unwilling people. **And from the violence that is in his hands.** "The acts of violence that their hands have committed (Job 16 : 17 : Ps. 7 : 3). This is the special sin of the Assyrians, always grasping after empire, oppressing other nations, and guilty of rapine and avarice at home (see Isa. 10 : 13, 14; 37 : 24, etc.; Nah. 2 : 1, 12; 3 : 1)." — *Pulpit Commentary.*

9. **Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent.** Like the Baal worshippers on Mount Carmel, who cried, "Jehovah, he is God" (1 Kings 18 : 39), these heathen Ninevites acknowledge the Supreme Being, and hope that he will have mercy upon them. Joel (2 : 14) uses the same words. "Repent," when referring to God, implies of course no sinfulness, but only a change of mind, a new decision, a turning from anger not from sin. **And turn away from his fierce anger.** The Christian revelation alone shows how eager God is to do this, if men will make it possible. **That we perish not?** As Jonah has prophesied that we shall. The entire Bible is a unit in the stern teaching that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18 : 4); that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6 : 23).

10. **And God saw their works.** And, of course, their faith back of their works, rendering their works possible. "God give thee, sinner, to rest *in* my Saviour; God give thee, saint, to live *to* thy Saviour." — *C. H. Spurgeon.* **That they turned from their evil way.** "What works? that they fasted? that they put on sackcloth? He passes by these; for the honor of a fast is not in abstinence from food, but in avoidance of sin." — *Chrysostom.* **And God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them.** From the Godward side, the Almighty cannot change his mind; with him "can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 1 : 17). But

speaking from the manward side, when our changed course enables God to show mercy, we say that he changes his course toward us. Thus we say that "the sun comes out" when our earth clouds slip away, though the sun has been "out" all the while. And he did it not. We are not told how Jonah and Nineveh came to know that the threatened doom was removed, but the fact is made plain. Later, as history shows, the Ninevites forgot Jonah, relapsed into all their former sins, heaped up the full measure of their violent iniquities, and were overthrown and destroyed as a nation. Only now, after two and a half millenniums of desolation, has the conquest of that region by the British given it a prospect of the recovery of its former prosperity.

III. **JONAH AND THE GOURD**, Jonah 4. Now we reach the climax of this great little book: Jonah was "displeased exceedingly"! What! angry because a vast city had turned from its wickedness and escaped destruction? Yes, for selfish egotism will bring even a prophet to that pass. "What becomes of my prophecy?" says Jonah. "The Lord has gone back on me, has left me in the lurch. I'll be a laughing-stock now all over Nineveh, and in Israel, too. What an anti-climax! I knew it would turn out this way, and that's why I refused to come the first time!" So this very human prophet went out east of the city where was a range of hills, and built a little hut of branches and twigs, and sat there sulkily, watching to see the outcome. He would at least wait out the forty days and give God a chance to fulfil the prediction.

Then God taught Jonah his great lesson by means of an acted parable. He used for this purpose a castor-oil plant called Palma Christi, so named because its very broad leaves look like the palm of a hand. It has a hollow stem, casts a dense shade, and grows very fast both near the Tigris and in Palestine. This rapid natural growth God hastened, so that Jonah was soon protected from the fierce sun by this grateful shade, and rejoiced in it.

But this very plant is subject to inroads of certain black caterpillars, which sometimes cut off its leaves in a single night, leaving only the bare ribs. This may have been the "worm" which the Lord sent to destroy Jonah's leafy covering, emphasizing his loss by sending at the same time one of the sultry, deadening siroccos common in that region, whose enfeebling heat overpowers man and beast. Then, as the terrible sun beat upon his unprotected head and his body grew faint and weak, Jonah prayed for death.

At this crisis came the voice of God to his servant, an appeal to reason:

"*Doest thou well to be angry for the plant?*"

Jonah (firmly and indignantly): "I do well to be angry, deadly angry."

Jehovah: "Are you so moved by the fall of a plant which you did not tend, the growth of a night? And shall I not have pity on all these men and women and children — yea, and dumb beasts, creatures which I have formed and cared for?"

Thus abruptly and impressively the book ends. We are not told what became of Jonah; he is not the real subject of the book. Its subject is the love of God for all men, and on that high note the message is closed. "This is the most Christian of all of the books." — *Prof. F. C. Eiselen.*

MISSIONARY TEACHINGS OF JONAH. "If the Jews gave a cold welcome to God's speaker, how harsh a reception might we expect in Nineveh! Yet Nineveh listened to the voice of God. Sometimes it is in the unlikeliest of homes that we find the deepest and finest heart religion. Sometimes it is the last boy in the family whom we had hope for, who comes out and out on the side of Jesus Christ." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.* And it may be that the nation or race which we despise is in God's providence nearer his kingdom than our own beloved land.

This story teaches us never to despair of our neighbors. "None of our neighbors can be more sinful than were the Ninevites." It also teaches us never to despair of ourselves. "Do you cherish the hope that God will be plenteous in mercy to all men? Then you have no more right to despair of and condemn yourselves than you have to condemn or despair of the world. You are part of the world." — *Rev. Samuel Cox, D.D.*

Jonah teaches "the old truth that we are all so slow to believe, that not only is God able to save to the uttermost, but that all men are brethren, and all are alike in need of the common redemption." — *Rev. Henry A. Stimson, D.D.*

Jonah teaches that the way to reach men with the gospel is to go with it to them. Missions cannot be worked at long range, by letters, tracts, even by prayers. These messages begin to be effective only after the personal messenger is on the ground.

Only one other book of the Bible besides Jonah ends with a question. "It is

God's question, the great unanswered question of the ages. The supreme interrogation mark in mercy still stands awaiting what answer men will give. What?" — *Rev. George L. Petrie, D.D.*

"Stern Prophet, in thy blindness
O whither wilt thou flee?
A God of loving kindness
In all the world is He:
Lean on the wings of morning,
Sea's utmost bounds explore,
His darkness still is dawning
With joy for evermore." — *Herbert Kynaston.*

LESSON XI. — March 12.

AMOS WARNS ISRAEL. — Amos 6 : 1–8.

(Temperance Lesson.)

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise.* — Prov. 20 : 1.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 15 : 1–5.
Reference Material : Isa. 5 : 11, 12, 22, 23 ; 28 : 1–13 ; Hos. 4 : 11 ; Amos 2 : 6–8 ; 5 : 10–15 ; 8 : 4–7 ; Gal. 5 : 19–21.
Primary Topic : God Sends Amos on an Errand.
Lesson Material : Amos 6 : 1–7 ; 7 : 10–15.
Memory Verse : Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live. Amos 5 : 14.
Junior Topic : A Prophet Who Was a Friend to the Poor.
Lesson Material : Amos 6 : 1–7.
Memory Verse : Prov. 20 : 1.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : The Consequences of Self-Indulgence.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Social Evils Yet to Be Conquered.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will enjoy a thorough lesson in Bible geography, aided by the maps and by a sand map. Show the Dead Sea and the wilderness of Judea. Speak of David's hiding in this wilderness, of Christ's temptation there, and of John the Baptist's preaching there. Speak of Moses' view of Canaan from the mountains of Moab, of Hebron to the south, of Bethlehem and Jerusalem to the north, and of the valley where David killed Goliath to the northwest. Show how Amos grew up with all these memories, and then tell his heroic story. Set the pupils to talking about matters that need to be put right by Amos-like courage in their schools, in their neighborhoods, and in the town.

The Older Classes will find this lesson a fine opportunity to discuss reforms. First have a talk or essay on Amos and his life-work, then another on the book of Amos, and a third on the central message of our lesson passage. Explain all phrases in the lesson that are not understood. Pass on to a discussion of the reforms needed to-day to which you feel that Amos would address himself if he were living. Each one of them will be presented by some one that is enthusiastic for it, and will stir up the class to equal enthusiasm.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Amos and His Message for Our Day.

I. Amos : the Man and the Book.
   A heroic figure.
   A burning message.
II. Revelry and Ruin, vs. 1–8.
   The careless carousers.
   The impending disaster.
III. Work for a Modern Amos.
   The temperance reform.
   Other reforms that await us.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Tekoa and its influence on Amos.
The character and work of Amos.
The literary character of the book of Amos.
Amos and modern reforms.
Amos compared with Elijah and John the Baptist.
Other Bible examples of bold testimony.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

On Tekoa and Beth-el, Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* and Geikie's *The Holy Land and the*

Bible. On Amos, Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Wells's *Bible Miniatures*, George Adam Smith's "Minor Prophets" in *The Expositor's Bible*, Farrar's *Minor Prophets*, Adeney in *Men of the Old Testament*, other works on the prophets by Eiselen, Duhm, Petrie, Fowler, etc. Leading commentaries are those by Mitchell (*Amos: an Essay in Exegesis*), Smith (*The Bible for Home and School*), Horton (*New Century Bible*), Harper (*International Critical Commentary*), Driver (*Cambridge Bible*), Ellicott, *The Pulpit Bible*, etc.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Amos prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II., B.C. 832 to 792 (Beecher). This monarch extended his realm as far as David's and Solomon's.

Place. — Amos lived at Tekoa in Judah and prophesied at Beth-el in Israel ; see below.

Rocky Hills and Plains of Beth-el.

I. AMOS, THE MAN AND THE BOOK. Amos means " Bearer," a name well suited to a shepherd and also to a prophet who bore on his heart the burden of his nation. Amoz, the father of Isaiah, is an entirely different name.

His Calling was the common one of his village, for he tended sheep, and perhaps owned his flock. The sheep he tended were a dwarfed variety, with short legs and ill-formed faces, but their wool was especially fine. He also (Amos 7 : 14) tended sycomore (fig-mulberry) trees, pinching or scratching the fruit to promote its ripening. This tree bears several crops during the season, but the fruit, as large as small figs, is insipid and woody. The tree grows as large as a walnut tree, and it was one of these that Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus.

Tekoa, the home of Amos, was a village of Judea five miles south of Bethlehem, ten miles south of Jerusalem, nine miles north of Hebron. It stood on a hill facing the wilderness of Judea, which stretches in tumbled desolation fifteen miles eastward to the Dead Sea. It was fortified by Rehoboam (2 Chron. 11 : 6), and its common people helped Nehemiah build the wall of Jerusalem while its nobles held aloof (Neh. 3 : 5, 27). " The name still lingers as Tekua, a ruined village on a hill broad at the top, where are found the remains of the foundations of houses, often with beveled stones, the whole occupying an area of four or five acres. There is also a castle, but of more modern date." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary*.

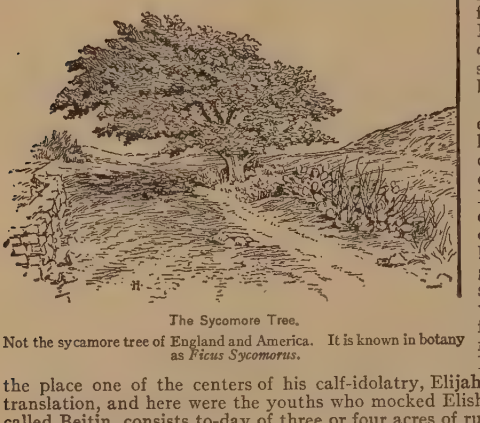
" No one can read his book without feeling that Amos haunted heights, and lived in the face of very wide horizons. The slopes on which Amos herded his cattle show the mass of desert hills with their tops *below* the spectator, and therefore displaying every meteoric effect in a way they could not have done had he been obliged to look *up* to them. The cold wind that blows off them after sunset ; through a gap the Dead Sea, with its heavy mists ; beyond the gulf the range of Moab, cold and gray, till the sun leaps from behind his barrier, and in a moment the world of hill-tops below Tekoa is flooded with light — that was the landscape of Amos." — *George Adam Smith*.

The Education of Amos was obtained in part from the grandeur of his surroundings ; in part from his simple and active life, strengthening his body and giving him leisure for thought ; in part from the knowledge of the written law of God which he evidently had ; and in part from business trips which he may have taken to Jerusalem, Beth-el, Damascus, and even farther, noting the evil customs of the times and hearing strange tales of the cruelty and iniquity of other lands. All of this varied training is reflected in his book.

" As the simple, sincere, and keen-eyed shepherd pondered over what he had seen and heard and contrasted the luxury, vice, and heartlessness of the merchants and rulers with the poverty, the sufferings, and the wrongs of hard-working men belonging

to his own social level, he became conscious of an irresistible appeal to forsake his flocks and go forth as a prophet of the Lord (Amos 7 : 15)." — *Bible for Home and School.*

Thus moved by the Spirit of God, Amos began to utter his great message. He may have preached in his own country of Judah, but if so we know nothing of it ; he went primarily to the Northern Kingdom, because though Judah was bad Israel was worse. Jeroboam II. had raised it to the height of power and prosperity, and there the sins of pride, injustice, and evil living were at their shamefulest. Its doom, Amos foresaw, was near at hand, and whatever was to be done for it must be done soon. Therefore Amos betook himself to Beth-el, the chief sanctuary of Israel, a city under the special patronage of Jeroboam II.



The Sycomore Tree.

Not the sycamore tree of England and America. It is known in botany as *Ficus Sycomorus.*

Beth-el, situated about eleven miles north of Jerusalem, twenty-one miles north of Tekoa, was an ancient city of the Canaanites named Luz. Jacob named it Beth-el, " House of God," because of the stairway vision which he saw there, a vision suggested perhaps by the great stone terraces of the hills on which his eyes rested as he fell asleep. The ark was here for a time, Samuel judged Israel here, Jeroboam made the place one of the centers of his calf-idolatry, Elijah came hither on his way to translation, and here were the youths who mocked Elisha. The place, which is now called Beitin, consists to-day of three or four acres of ruins.

The Arab shepherds of to-day " are fine fellows from a physical point of view, — tall and straight, with bright eyes, clearly cut features, and a bearing that betrays a consciousness of the strength bred in them by their free and simple life. Amos must have looked much like one of these Arab shepherds. He, too, was brown and sturdy. He, too, was clad in sheepskin when he led his flocks to pasture." — *Prof. H. G. Mitchell.* Such was the figure that stood fearlessly in the market-place and on the street corners of Beth-el, haranguing the crowds, and boldly condemning the nobles, the rich merchants, and the cruel rulers.

The Reception which Amos Met is indicated by only a single incident of the book. When he came to name in his prophecy of doom the king of Israel himself (Amos 7 : 9), Amaziah, the priest of Beth-el, thought it necessary to defend his royal master from the attack of the mysterious stranger. Accordingly he sent word to Jeroboam at Samaria, giving him a summary of Amos's utterances, which would seem to be entirely seditious. Without waiting for Jeroboam's orders, Amaziah ordered Amos out of the country, but the only satisfaction he got was a statement from the bold prophet that he was the spokesman of Jehovah, and that the Lord had revealed to him that Israel was surely to be captured, and that Amaziah himself would die in exile, while his wife would be treated as a harlot by the captors, his children slain, and his land seized. Then Amos went right on with his preaching.

Tradition says that Amos continued to prophesy in Beth-el until he was seized, cruelly beaten, and then sent back to Tekoa, where, a few days later, he died. There is no doubt that he was of martyr stuff, but his book that we possess would seem to show that he lived long enough to write it, and to compose it in an orderly and masterly fashion. The style is most striking, clear and forceful, and full of picturesque imagery drawn from his own calling and observation. Indeed, as a literary workman as well as a splendid and heroic figure, Amos is surpassed by few if any of the Hebrew prophets.

II. **REVELRY AND RUIN,** vs. 1–8. The book of Amos may be divided into three sections. The first section, chapters 1, 2, works up gradually to Israel by pic-

1. Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!

2. Pass ye unto Căl'-nĕh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hă'-măth the great; then go down to Gath of the Phĭ-lĭs'-tĭnes: are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?

turing the punishment that is to fall on seven neighboring nations, taking them in order and ever winding nearer to Israel: Syria, Philistia, Phœnicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and last of all because nearest, Amos's own Judah. Then swiftly the prophet turns upon Israel, and proclaims its coming downfall. This is elaborated in the second section, chapters 3–6, which pictures the depth of Israel's guilt and the unwilling severity of Jehovah. Our passage is a portion of the climax of this section. The concluding section, chapters 7–9, illustrates the fate of Israel in a series of visions, or dream parables.

A Syrian Shepherd in the Home Country of Amos near Tekoa.

1. **Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.** "Careless in Zion," Professor Mitchell translates it. Zion is the name of the hill in Jerusalem on which stood the ancient Jebusite citadel and to which the ark was first brought. When the temple was built on Mount Moriah the term "Zion" was extended to include it. Here it is still further extended to signify all Jerusalem. In condemning Israel, Amos was not blind to the folly of his own Judah. **And to them that are secure.** Heedless indifference to their own wickedness, and cynical unbelief in the possibility of punishment, made both Israel and Judah very hard to reach with a religious message. No evangelist or reformer can make any progress till he has broken through this crust of carelessness and pride and produced a conviction of sin. **In the mountain of Samaria.** Samaria was the capital of the northern nation as Jerusalem of the southern. It was built on a hill with steep sides, the summit being a table-land about a mile from east to west. This "mountain of Samaria" was well fortified and withstood long sieges. **The notable men of the chief of the nations.** Amos means the ruling classes of both Israel and Judah, nations superior in wealth and power to the nations around them, and they should therefore be examples to them; but they were far from it. There are many in our own land who boast of the United States in much the same terms, being blind to our many faults, and to the excellencies of other countries from which we have much to learn. **To whom the house of Israel come!** The people of both Israel and Judah come to these rulers for guidance, wise counsel, just laws, inspiring examples. But they find none of these things.

2. **Pass ye unto Calneh, and see.** It is uncertain what city is meant, and conjectures range from a city in Babylonia to cities in northern Syria. Whatever city is referred to, it had probably been captured recently by the Assyrians. Let confident Samaria take warning. **And from thence go ye to Hamath the great.** Hamath was an important city on the Orontes about 150 miles north of Damascus, the capital of the kingdom of Hamath. "It was repeatedly engaged in hostilities with Assyria, to which it was almost continuously a vassal. The prophet evidently has in mind some recent disaster that has left Hamath prostrate." — *Prof. J. M. P. Smith, Ph.D.* **Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.** "Down" because Samaria was on high ground and Gath on a low seacoast plain. Gath was one of the five chief cities of Philistia, west of Palestine, — the city nearest to Judah. It was captured and destroyed by King Uzziah of Judah. **Are they better than these kingdoms? That is,**

3. — ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

4. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

5. That sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David;

6. That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

7. Therefore shall they now go captive with the first that go captive; and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away.

---

the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Amos expects an emphatic No! **Or is their border greater than your border?** No, again! for they have been reduced by misfortunes. Therefore let Israel and Judah take heed, for their turn for punishment and downfall may come next.

3. **— ye that put far away the evil day.** God's day of judgment and punishment, which the careless rulers refuse to think about, it is so far in the future. "But how do you know it is?" Amos pointedly asks. **And cause the seat of violence to come near.** The seat of violence is the judge's or ruler's seat, where violence sits in the place of justice and wise government. *This* the wicked rulers draw near, while thrusting far off into the future God's salutary judgment seat.

4. **That lie upon beds of ivory.** Beds whose frames were inlaid with ivory, like those which Sennacherib records that he took from King Hezekiah of Judah. These were regarded as the height of extravagance and luxury. **And stretch themselves upon their couches.** "Sprawl out, so verse 7. Looseness of gesture goes with looseness of morals. To lie at table was a new luxurious custom recently introduced. Formerly they sat at table, Gen. 27 : 19; Judg. 19 : 6; 1 Sam. 20 : 5, 24." — *Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D.* **And eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall.** "Lambs carefully selected from the flock on account of special fatness or daintiness. Calves reared artificially in a stall, a place in which they are shut up in order to be easily fattened." — *William R. Harper.* Compare the father's feast for the prodigal son, Luke 15 : 23.

5. **That sing idle songs to the sound of the viol.** Mitchell translates: "Who twitter to the note of the psaltery," expressing Amos's contempt for the trifling melodies sung at their feasts. The "viol" or psaltery was a harp-like instrument, sometimes with as many as ten strings, used to accompany singing. **That invent for themselves instruments of music, like David.** David introduced instruments of music into the temple worship (1 Chron. 15 : 16, 19-21, 24; 2 Chron. 29 : 25, 26). "These rulers of ours will be second Davids, forsooth!" says Amos sarcastically. "They will be inventors and innovators, but for the benefit of their drunken revels, not of sacred services."

6. **That drink wine in bowls.** These were basins used to dash blood over the altar in sacrifice or in making a libation of wine. Not satisfied with ordinary drinking-cups, these revelling rulers gulp down great bowlfuls of wine. **And anoint themselves with the chief oils.** Anointing the body with oil, especially after washing, was a common practice, soothing and refreshing the body and protecting it against the heat. "As a rule, fresh olive oil was used for the purpose, but aromatic spices and perfumes were often added, especially by the rich, and such choice and costly compounds are alluded to here." — *Cambridge Bible.* Compare Mary's anointing of Jesus, Mark 14 : 3, 5. **But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.** Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph, and those two leading tribes stand often for the Northern Kingdom. These reckless rulers have no sorrow for the woes that are coming, surely and swiftly, on their people.

7. **Therefore shall they now go captive with the first that go captive.** These rulers, says Amos, are proud of their preëminence, thinking that they are first in power, in wealth, in skill and refinement. They are to have a preëminence indeed! They are to be the first of the captives! They are to head the procession into exile! **And the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away.** "The shouts of these loafers shall be stilled."

8. The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts: I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

8. **The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself.** Compare Amos 4 : 2. God cannot state a truth with more solemn emphasis than to found it on his own holiness and might. **Saith Jehovah, the God of hosts.** The God of armies, who alone can give power to the Assyrian hosts to overcome Israel. **I abhor the excellency of Jacob.** "Jacob" means the Israelites, descendants of Israel (Jacob). God abhors "not the true glory of Jacob (Amos 8 : 7), but their boasted wealth and power." — *Prof. H. G. Mitchell.* **And hate his palaces.** Hateful places indeed, for in them these rulers have stored up the glittering fruits of their oppression; see Amos 3 : 10. **Therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.** "The city" here is Samaria, the wicked capital of this wicked nation; both its citizens and its treasures are to be handed over to the foreign conqueror. Amos sees such pitiable scenes as attended the German invasion of Belgium and northern France in the World War.

III. **WORK FOR A MODERN AMOS.** "There is no reason for setting Amos in the second rank of prophets, merely because only a small collection of his utterances has reached us. This small collection is enough to show us that its author is one of the leading lights of religion." — *Principal Walter F. Adeney, D.D.* The modernness of his work is especially remarkable. This preacher of righteousness spoke definitely to his own time, but no less definitely to ours. His truths have a universal application.

Still Intemperance. The United States is a prohibition nation, but for many years we shall need Amoses to fight the forces of selfish greed that are trying to bring back the saloon. We need now to fight the tobacco habit, fostered to the ruin of the health of millions by the temptations put in their way by grasping or thoughtless money-makers. We need to combat the insane pursuit of pleasure, which wastes so much time and money on theatres and the movies. The saloon has left many heirs to its bad business.

The Sin of Waste. Ex-president Charles W. Eliot of Harvard once made a list of the annual expenditures on luxuries in the United States. The list included such items as tobacco, $1,200,000,000; intoxicating liquor, $2,200,000,000; jewelry and plate, $800,000,000; confectionery, $200,000,000; tea and coffee, $100,000,000; and chewing-gum, $13,000,000! There is great need of a modern Amos to open men's eyes to the sinfulness of extravagance and the connection between a simple life and a strong and holy one. "An Indian on being asked how it was that he came into the kingdom of God so easily, at once replied: 'We are commanded to forsake all. The white man has to give up his house, but I have no house. The white man has to give up his riches, but I have no riches. The white man has to give up his farm, but I have no farm. Indian has nothing to give up but his blanket, and I throw off my blanket very easily.'" — *Henry Ward Beecher.*

The Folly of Pride. If Amos were living now, he would find the same necessity of rebuking pride in New York and London, in Paris and Berlin, as ever in Samaria and Beth-el. Before Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Russia he told the Russian ambassador that he would destroy that empire. The ambassador's reply was, "Man proposes, but God disposes." "Tell your master," thundered the arrogant Corsican, "that I am he that proposes, and I am he that disposes." And that Russian campaign was Napoleon's ruin. The same spirit is to be found to-day very often in rulers, public officials, political parties, rich men, employers, and labor unions. "Take God into account, or he will take you into account," cries Amos. "Humble yourselves before him, or he will humble you."

Abolishing of Poverty. There are two kinds of poverty. There is that of the man who, as Prof. William James said, "elects to be poor in order to simplify and save his inner life"; and there is the poverty that is not chosen, but forced upon millions by lack of opportunity and pressure of circumstances, grinding their lives into sordid struggles for bare existence. The Amos of to-day, while recognizing the full value of simple living, will seek to abolish compulsory poverty by giving all that want to work a chance to work, and a full and fair reward for honest toil.

The Collective Neighbor. Amos would have rejoiced in Christ's command that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. That command requires us to watch over our neighbor's property, his happiness, and his character as we would watch over our own. This has long been taught by Christians, but it is only recently that the

church has come to feel its responsibility for our collective neighbor, the community, the state. " This collective neighbor of mine is the victim of enormous and unspeakable perfidies and injuries. Selfish and greedy men, in all sorts of combinations, are constantly bent on plundering him. Against their aggressions I ought to be a swift witness and an unrelenting foe." — *Washington Gladden.*

Justice to All. " Every Federal judge is required to take an oath that he ' will administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich.' This oath, while defining the official obligations of the judge, with equal emphasis states the duty of every citizen." — *Justice David J. Brewer, of the Supreme Court.* Amos preached to the rich, that they should be just to the poor ; with equal insistence he would preach to the poor, that they should be just to the rich.

Other Reforms for the Modern Amos. They are numerous, and each thinker will wish to add to the list. They will include :

Divorce Reform. In 1886 there were 708 divorces in England while the United States, with not much greater population, had 25,000. In 1906 there were 844 divorces in England and 72,000 in the United States. And our sad preëminence in this matter is growing.

Sabbath Observance. Macaulay wrote : " We are not poorer, but richer, because we have through many ages rested from our labor one day in seven." This wealth we are recklessly throwing away at the call of sport and of trade.

Child Labor. " Marietta, the youngest skilled worker found by the National Child Labor Committee in an investigation of the New York tenement house industry, was too young to tell what time it was. She couldn't even count the petals she handled. But her fingers were not too small to put together the 1620 different pieces it took for the 540 forget-me-nots she made in a day. Her baby eyes could still see by the light of the evening lamp to put the tiny blossoms together, though they could not read the hands of the clock pointing to 8. And the pay to Marietta's family for her day's work was five cents."

The Social Evil. Fed by the saloon, it still exists, though the saloon has died. It means the destruction of manhood and womanhood, the ruin of family life, of health, of character. It lays its pall on the innocent as well as the guilty. It is probably the most awful evil in our land to-day. Amos will not be silent in regard to it.

The End of War. The World War could have been prevented by practical Christianity. Only an aggressive, winsome Christianity can prevent another World War far more terrible than the last one. Statesmanship, organization, treaties, will help, but they can never end war without Christianity. Amos will see this.

The Spiritual Law. " Although Amos has the deepest sympathy with the oppressed and the strongest antipathy to their oppressors, the social aspect of the prophecy is secondary, while the spiritual aspect is primary, if not predominant. For in the spiritual world alone lies the remedy for the inequalities and injustices of this. The eternal principle of righteousness, ' Seek ye me, and ye shall live,' to which, as the Rabbis said, Amos has reduced the 613 commands of the Mosaic law, is after all the only true solution of all social problems." — *Rev. James Hastings, D.D.*

LESSON XII. — March 19.

THE DOWNFALL OF ISRAEL. — 2 Kings 17 : 1–18.

PRINT vs. 9–18.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Righteousness exalteth a nation ; But sin is a reproach to any people.*** — Prov. 14 : 34.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 1.
Reference Material : Hos. 7 ; Amos 2 : 6–16.
Primary Topic : What Came of Doing Wrong.
Lesson Material : 2 Kings 17 : 1–18. Print vs. 9–18.
Memory Verse : I will not forget thy word. Ps. 119 : 16.
Junior Topic : Israel's Punishment for Disobedience.
Lesson Material : 2 Kings 17 : 1–18. Print vs. 9–18.
Memory Verses : Matt. 7 : 24–27.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : Results of Disobedience to God.
Topic for Young People and Adults : How National Sins Are Punished.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will find in this lesson a teaching on disobedience, and on the sad results of all kinds of wrong-doing. Tell them about the idolatry now practised in heathen lands such as China, India, and Africa. When the Israelites practised such wickedness they became heathen. The prophets were God's missionaries to them, but they would not listen. How much better are we, if we do not listen to good advice and kind warnings ?

The Intermediate and Senior Classes may make a diagram showing the kings of Israel from Jeroboam arranged along a vertical line at distances corresponding to the lengths of their reigns. Insert the prophets at the right places. Draw across it a big black mark at the point of our lesson. Teach them that ruin such as came to Israel will come to their lives if they fail to obey God.

The Older Classes may make this lesson a summary of the history of Israel from the division of the kingdom to the fall of Samaria. One person may present a review of the characters of the various kings, another an account of the foreign relations of Israel, seven others may describe in detail the reigns of the chief kings, Jeroboam I., Omri, Ahab, Joram, Jehu, Joash, and Jeroboam II. Still another may describe the fall of Israel and the captivity, and the teacher will close with a discussion of our lesson text, giving the reasons for the tragic close of this history, and applying it to the sins of our own nation and how they will be punished if we persist in them.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Samaria was captured B.C. 722, according to a determination from the Assyrian inscriptions.

Place. — Samaria. The region of the upper Euphrates.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Prophets of the Northern Kingdom.
Characteristics of Israelite idolatry.
General character of the Israelite kings.
National sins of Israel.
The Bible doctrine of retribution.
Assyrian history of the period.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Results of Disobedience to God.

I. The Fall of Samaria, vs. 1–6.
- The folly of King Hoshea.
- The siege of Samaria.
- The captivity of Israel.

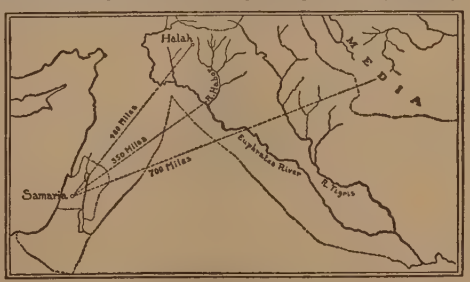
II. Why Israel Fell, vs. 7–12.
- What God had done for Israel.
- Imitating other nations.
- The wickedness of idolatry.

III. The Chances that God Gave Israel, vs. 13–18.
- The pleas of the prophets.
- The hard hearts of the people.
- The anger of the Almighty.
- The penalties of disobedience.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Watkinson's *The Education of the Heart.* Miller's *Devotional Hours.* Burrell's *Wayfarers of the Bible. Monday Club Sermons,* 1911 (Loomis); 1904 (Dunning). Maclaren's *Expositions. Commentaries* on 2 Kings, especially *The Expositor's Bible, The Pulpit Commentary, The Speaker's Commentary,* Ellicott, *The New Century Bible,* and *The Cambridge Bible.*

I. **THE FALL OF SAMARIA**, vs. 1–6. The Northern Kingdom lasted only two and a half centuries after it separated from Judah. Starting with Jeroboam, its kings had been an evil lot. While the royal house of Judah continued in unbroken succession, in Israel dynasty followed dynasty amid the most revolting scenes of assassination, treachery, and civil discord. Jeroboam I., the first king of the Northern Kingdom, started the nation on its downward way by establishing the idolatrous worship of the golden calves at Beth-el and Dan. His son and successor, Nadab, was murdered after an evil reign of a few months, and thus ended *the first dynasty.*



Samaria.

The Assyrian records state that 27,290 of the inhabitants were carried into captivity. They were settled in the city or district of Halah, on the River Habor, and in Media.

Baasha, the murderer, was a daring upstart of lowly family, who reigned twenty-four years, continuing Jeroboam's idolatries. He made an alliance with King Ben-hadad of Damascus and at-

tacked Judah, but was finally driven back from all his gains. Elah, his son and successor, hardly reigned a year. He sent Zimri and Omri, his generals, against the Philistines while he remained home to carouse. Zimri returned suddenly and assassinated him in the midst of a drinking bout. Thus disgracefully ended *the second dynasty* of Israel.

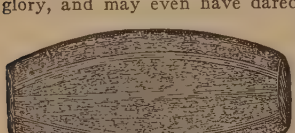
Zimri reigned only seven days, but succeeded in slaying all of Elah's family before General Omri, his rival, marched back with the army and attacked him. Zimri burned the royal palace over his own head, perishing in the flames. End of *the third dynasty*.

Omri reigned for twelve years, during the first four of which a part of the nation owned the sway of his rival, Tibni. Tibni, however, was at last put out of the way by the usual method, and Omri strengthened his position by establishing Samaria as his capital (the seat of government had been Tirzah) and strongly fortifying it. He conquered Moab and made it tributary, and waged an unsuccessful war with Syria. His son Ahab, who next came to the throne and who reigned for twenty-two years, is chiefly famous because Elijah did his great work in his reign. He married Jezebel, a wicked Phœnician princess, and imported into Israel her foul and cruel idolatries, the worship of Baal, of Molech, of Ashtoreth. He won victories over Syria, established Jezreel as his summer capital, and advanced his kingdom in wealth and importance. He was killed in battle with the Syrians. He was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who received such injuries from a fall from a window that he reigned less than two years. On his death his brother Jehoram (or Joram) came to the throne and held it for twelve years, despised by Elisha for his despicable character, but aided by the prophet as a matter of patriotism. Elisha at last had the warrior Jehu anointed king of Israel, and Jehu shot Jehoram through the heart. Thus perished Israel's *fourth dynasty*, that of Omri.

Jehu's dynasty, *the fifth*, was the most powerful, important, and long-lived of all Israel's dynasties. Five kings of this house reigned for more than a century. Jehu's reign was marked by wholesale murders, including the destruction of the Baal worshippers in Samaria. He consented to pay tribute to Assyria, but he reigned with a fair degree of prosperity for twenty-eight years. Jehoahaz, his son, allowed the kingdom to lapse into idolatry, and had a disastrous reign of sixteen years, suffering much from Syrian inroads. His son Joash (or Jehoash) was a better man and had a more successful reign of seventeen years, defeating both Syria and Judah. His son, Jeroboam II., had a long reign of forty-one years. Supported by the prophet Jonah, he fought the surrounding nations one after the other, winning great victories which extended his sway over a region as great as David and Solomon ruled, and gaining a prosperity which aroused pride and wickedness that incurred the condemnation of Amos and Hosea. Zachariah was the last king of the dynasty of Jehu. He reigned only six months, when he was killed by an adventurer named Shallum.

Shallum (*the sixth dynasty*) reigned only a month, when Menahem at the head of an army drove him from the throne and put him to death.

Menahem (*the seventh dynasty*) reigned for ten years with a fair degree of military glory, and may even have dared to lead an expedition against Assyria; but an Assyrian army soon reduced him to subjection, and made him pay a heavy annual tribute. His son, Pekahiah, reigned for only two years when he was barbarously murdered by Pekah, one of his own officers.



Sargon's Cylinder, Recording the Conquest of Samaria.

Exhumed from Nineveh.

Pekah (*the eighth dynasty*) was a man of vigor and ability who in a reign of twenty years crushed his foes at home and formed a confederacy to resist the aggressions of Assyria. The Assyrians punished Israel for its daring and stirred up an adventurer, Hoshea (*the ninth dynasty*), to kill Pekah and himself assume the crown.

And so the last of this long succession of foolish, violent, and wicked monarchs was Hoshea (or Hosea), which means "Salvation," the name borne by Joshua in his earlier days. "In the irony of history the name of the last king of Ephraim was thus identical with that of her earliest and greatest hero, just as the last of Roman emperors bore the double name of the founder of Rome and the founder of the empire, Romulus Augustulus. By a yet deeper irony of events the king in whose reign came the final precipitation of ruin bore the name which signified deliverance from it. . . . Singular

9. And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah their God: and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city;

to relate, Hoshea is the only one of all the kings of Israel of whom the historian has a word of commendation ; for while we are told that ' he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,' it is added that it was ' not as the kings of Israel that were before him.' But we do not know wherein either his evil-doing or his superiority consisted. The Rabbis guess that he did not replace the golden calf at Dan which Tiglath-Pileser had taken away (Hos. 10 : 6) ; or that he did not prevent his subjects from going to Hezekiah's passover. ' It seems like a harsh jest,' says Ewald, ' that this Hoshea, who was better than all his predecessors, was to be the last king.' But so it has often been in history. The vengeance of the French Revolution smote the innocent and harmless Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette — not Louis XIV. or Louis XV. and Madame du Pompadour." — *F. W. Farrar.*

Hoshea reigned for nine years. Thinking the times opportune for humbling the pride of Assyria, he made an alliance with So (Sabako ?), Pharaoh of Egypt ; but Shalmaneser came into the land of Israel at the head of an army and laid siege to Samaria. The city held out for three years, in the course of which Shalmaneser died ; but Sargon, his successor, captured the city in B.C. 722, carrying into exile 27,290 of its inhabitants. He placed them probably along the upper waters of the Euphrates, whence some of them returned under Cyrus, while others intermarried with their captors. The farmers were left in Palestine to till the land for the victors, and colonists were brought in from Assyria, forming the mongrel race of Samaritans so despised by the Jews of the time of Christ.

Sargon II, Captor of Samaria.

II. **WHY ISRAEL FELL**, vs. 7–12. The sacred historian is not content to record history, but pierces to the higher truth that lies back of history, giving the reasons for the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. And first (verses 7, 8) he reminds his readers what God has done for his people, especially in the one great deliverance from bondage in Egypt. No other nation had had such a deliverance, or such a marvelous and convincing proof of God's favor. Yet in spite of all this, what had Israel done ?

9. **And the children of Israel.** The descendants of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32 : 24–32), particularly, here, the northern Israelites. **Did secretly things that were not right.** They practised secret rites, occult religion, shameful ceremonies which they would not dare to perform in the light of day. See Isa. 8 : 19 ; Ezek. 8 : 7–12. "Secret sins bring ruin just as surely as sins that are open." — *J. R. Miller.* **Against Jehovah their God.** Treating God as an enemy ; throwing up their sins as a barrier against him. **And they built them high places in all their cities.** Places of idolatrous worship built on hills, and then such places no matter where built. " The use of elevations for purposes of worship is so widespread as to be almost universal. If any reason is to be assigned, the best seems to be that to dwellers in hilly country the heaven appears to rest on the ridges and the sun to go forth from them." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* **From the tower of the watchmen.** " The watch towers erected for solitary guardians of the vineyards and flocks in lonely localities." — *Dummelow.* **To the fortified city.** The thickly populated places, over against the thinly settled regions of the preceding phrase.

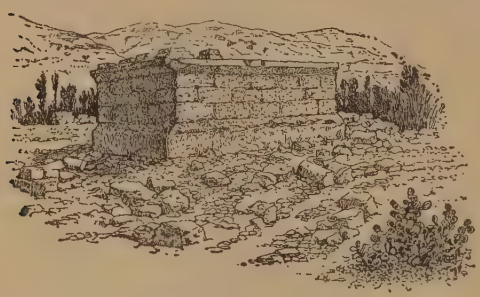
10. **And they set them up pillars.** Sacred stones, regarded as the homes of the gods, and originally used as altars. Later they became mere symbols of the god.

10. And they set them up pillars and A-shē′-rĭm upon every high hill, and under every green tree;

11. And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger;

12. And they served idols, whereof Jehovah had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

And Asherim. "The plural of asherah, which seems to have been a survival of the sacred tree, as the pillar was of the sacred stone. It was a wooden pole (Judg. 6 : 26), the trunk of a tree stripped of its branches (Deut. 16 : 21), erected by the side of the altar (Jer. 17 : 2). It would seem that from very ancient times the object had been personified, and the word used as the name of a *goddess*, who is apparently in the Old Testament sometimes identified with Ashtoreth. This marked association of the symbol with a female deity made it at all times repugnant to the true religion of Israel." — *New Century Bible.* **Upon every high hill.** Even the temple at Jerusalem, free from idolatrous associations as it was, was placed on a hill. **And under every green tree.** "The Hebrew word used here for *green* means rather *flourishing*. Large trees are rare in Palestine, and so form important landmarks. Compare Judg. 4 : 5 ; 1 Sam. 22 : 6 ; 31 : 13. In different ways such trees acquired a sacred or semi-sacred character, in some cases because they were associated with appearances of Jehovah or of the Angel of Jehovah (Gen. 18 : 1 ; Judg. 6 : 11), in others perhaps because the flourishing condition of the tree was ascribed to the beneficence of some deity who inhabited the spot. For a nobler form of this last thought compare Ps. 104 : 16." — *Cambridge Bible.*



Supposed Ruined Pillar.

11. **And there they burnt incense in all the high places.** Incense, the symbol of prayer, was to have been burned only on the altar of incense in the temple at Jerusalem. **As did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them.** Doubtless the Canaanites used incense in their worship, as all other idolatrous nations did. "The Egyptians used incense largely in the worship of Ammon. The Babylonians burned a thousand talents' weight of it every year at the great festival of Bel-Merodach. The Greeks and Romans offered it with every sacrifice." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **And they wrought wicked things.** "Not merely idolatrous rites, but also the hideous immoralities which constituted a recognized part of the nature-worships of Canaan." — *Ellicott.* **To provoke Jehovah to anger.** Not for that purpose, but having that result.

12. **And they served idols.** The primary meaning of the word translated "idol" is "dung," and so it is a term of supreme contempt. **Whereof Jehovah had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.** In such passages as Ex. 20 : 4, 5 ; Deut. 12 : 31, etc.

III. **THE CHANCES THAT GOD GAVE ISRAEL,** vs. 13–18. As the writer draws to the conclusion of his indictment he reminds his readers that the final penalty did not fall without repeated warnings. God gave his people every opportunity to obey him, if they would.

13. **Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel.** Warned Israel. He might justly have been content with giving the written law plainly, but he added to it the spoken urgings and rebukes of the prophets. **And unto Judah.** Though not so far fallen into evil as the Northern Kingdom, yet Judah also needed and received the most earnest prophetic warnings. **By every prophet.** "Among the prophets who labored in Israel

13. Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God.

15. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified unto them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and *went* after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them.

---

were Ahijah, Jehu (son of Hanani), Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Jonah, Obed, Amos, and Hosea ; whilst those who ministered in Judah included (up to the time here indicated) Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Zechariah (son of Jehoiada), Micah, and Isaiah. Through such agents God exhorted and warned his people before sending upon them the punishments which their sins deserved." — *Dummelow*. **And every seer.** Primarily, seers are those that see visions, prophets those that speak forth God's word ; but the two terms came to mean about the same thing. **Saying, Turn ye from your evil ways.** This was the continual burden of the prophets' teaching, as may be seen from their books. **And keep my commandments and my statutes.** It was a positive message as well as a negative one : " Cease to do evil, learn to do well " (Isa. 1 : 16, 17). **According to all the law which I commanded your fathers.** By " the law " is meant both the formal, written law and the oral messages of the prophets. **And which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.** The prophets brought the law afresh to the people by interpreting and enforcing it.

14. **Notwithstanding, they would not hear.** It was not mere heedlessness, " They *did* not hear," but violent wilfulness, " They *would* not hear," they stopped their ears against the loving message. **But hardened their neck.** Literally, " made their neck stiff," a Hebrew expression signifying self-will and obstinacy.

Illustration. " A sailor reported to the captain during a storm that the water was gaining upon the vessel. The captain drove him away with angry words — he was too busy to give attention to the sailor's report. Again and again the warning was given, and each time it was unheeded. At last the barge was sinking and the men were ordered to the boat. There was not a moment to spare. A cable bound the boat to the barge, and the captain took his knife to cut it ; but as he turned to do this his face turned pale with horror — the cable was an iron chain. This is the story of thousands of lives. Men do not know until the last moment, when it is too late, that they are hopeless captives, passing to their doom in chains which they cannot break." — *J. R. Miller*.

Like to the neck of their fathers. " The Israelites are called ' a stiff-necked people ' in Ex. 32 : 9 ; 33 : 3, 5 ; 34 : 9 ; Deut. 9 : 6, 13 ; 31 : 27." — *Speaker's Commentary*. **Who believed not in Jehovah their God.** A common expression in the New Testament but rare in the Old Testament, where also it does not rise to the height of Christian faith.

15. **And they rejected his statutes.** By adopting a mode of life forbidden by them, and by ceasing to do what they required : sins of commission and of omission alike. **And his covenant that he made with their fathers.** " The covenant made at Sinai, first by the people generally (Ex. 19 : 5–8) and then by their formal representatives (Ex. 24 : 3–8), was, on their part, a solemn promise that ' all which the Lord commanded them they would do.' Rejecting the ' statutes ' of God was thus rejecting the ' covenant.' " — *Pulpit Commentary*. No one can refuse obedience and accept blessing. **And his testimonies which he testified unto them.** The Bible, especially Deuteronomy and the Psalms, speaks of God's law as his " testimony," bearing witness of his nature and of his loving desire for his creatures. See Ps. 119 : 22, 129, and many other verses. **And they followed vanity, and became vain.** " Vanity," meaning " emptiness, nothingness," is often applied to idols, as in 1 Kings 16 : 13. See this same phrase in Jer. 2 : 5. Following nothingness, they became nothings ; men always grow like the objects they pursue. **And went after the nations that were round about them.** God had enabled them to conquer these nations, and had thus proved how much better was the worship of God than the worship of idols ; yet they

16. And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Ă-shē′-răh, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Bā′-ăl.

17. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger.

18. Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

---

foolishly imitated those weaker nations. **Concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them.** This was involved in the frequent commands against idolatry, with its many attending cruelties and lusts.

16. **And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God.** Forsook them by paying no attention to them as well as by deliberately disobeying them. **And made them molten images.** Castings of some inferior metal overlaid with gold. **Even two calves.** Referring to the two images of calves set up by Jeroboam I. in Beth-el and Dan. They were regarded as representations of Jehovah, and the worship of them was a degraded form of Jehovah worship. **And made an Asherah.** A wooden representation of a Phœnician and Canaanite goddess, or simply a sacred tree or pole the worship of which was a survival of the ancient tree worship. **And worshipped all the host of heaven.** That is, the stars, the sun, the moon, against the worship of which they were warned in Deut. 4 : 19; 17 : 3. If it were not for this passage, and perhaps Amos 5 : 26, we might think that the Israelites had omitted this particular form of heathenism. **And served Baal.** By some regarded as the sun god, by others as the god of rain and of fertility, but probably a generic name for a large number of local gods differing in supposed characteristics.

17. **And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire.** This terrible rite came from Phœnicia. As an offering to the god, live children were placed on the extended arms of an image heated red-hot, falling thence into the red-hot lap to be burned to death. The cries of the children were drowned by the noise of flutes and drums. The parents were not to weep; if they did, the merit of the sacrifice was lost. **And used divination.** Foretelling the future by means of rods manipulated in various ways, or by the flight of arrows, or by the condition of the entrails of sacrificial victims, etc. "Telling fortunes" by cards, tea grounds, palmistry, and the like are forms of divination. **And enchantments.** "Although employed in the wider sense of augury or prognostication, the fundamental meaning of this word is divination by serpents." — *Rev. Dwight M. Pratt, D.D.* **And sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah.** "Idolatry is regarded as a *servitude*. Compare 1 Kings 21 : 20, 25," — *Ellicott.* **To provoke him to anger.** If a just God is ever to be angry at human wickedness, it would be at such folly and cruelty as these verses describe.

18. **Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel.** He had given the nation a long trial of more than two centuries. **And removed them out of his sight.** God watches over the righteous (Ps. 34 : 15; Jer. 31 : 28), but his eyes are turned away from the wicked (Ps. 34 : 16). **There was none left but the house of Judah only.** This one tribe of Judah, so much smaller than the ten tribes, so inferior in material resources and so much less likely to survive, did survive for 132 years longer. The reason can be only the reason here given, it was more obedient to Jehovah. Indeed, in all Christendom Judah still enjoys a spiritual and very real survival.

THE PENALTIES OF DISOBEDIENCE. "A piece of property abandoned by its owner as no longer useful to him is in legal phrase called 'derelict,' a term most often used of deserted vessels wrecked, ruined, and weltering in lonely seas. Such was that 'ship of state,' Israel, which Jehovah had once called his own but had been forced to discard because he could not use it. What else but derelicts were Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons who offered strange fire before Jehovah? What else were the unbelieving people that turned back from the threshold of the promised land to wander forty years and to die in the wilderness? What else was King Saul, who, through disobedience, forfeited his throne? What else were those disciples who turned back from following Jesus because his doctrine of the cross was too hard for them? What else was Judas the traitor?" — *Rev. Samuel Lane Loomis, D.D.* Every one that disobeys God's orders for his life becomes a derelict.

God's law is good, though disobedience to it brings evil. "No one doubts that the law of gravity, by which the worlds are kept true to their orbits, is a good law; yet the average life of a 'lofter' (that is, a workman engaged on the steel framework of our great buildings) is said to be only ten years. By the law of gravity, men are falling and dying every day; yet no one blames the law for it." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

Illustration. "Here is a man who grew up in a gentle, beautiful home. He had brightest prospects, fairest opportunities. He was well taught, nurtured in an atmosphere of holiness, of purity, of prayer. To-day he is a criminal, wearing chains, sentenced for twenty years for homicide. It is not an accident, a piece of 'ill luck,' that he is now where he is. The homicide was not the first sin — it was the end of a long series which probably began in a little boy's disobedience to his mother one day." — *J. R. Miller.*

"Is your high place the shrine of the goats and calves? How slow most of us would be to acknowledge this! and yet in essence and fact how many are guilty of this gross idolatry!" — *Rev. W. L. Watkinson, D.D.* George Eliot was much pleased by an actor who said to her, "Shakespeare is my god; I have no other god." "Italy is itself a religion," said Mazzini. The dying Turner is said to have looked at the sun and exclaimed, "That is my god." John Stuart Mill held "his wife's memory as a religion." "The glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the true, supreme ideal. Nothing lower than Christ." — *Watkinson.*

Disobedience is terribly progressive. "The sinner who steels himself against the divine remonstrance does not merely go on in his old sins, but adds new ones. Begin with the calves, and fancy that you are worshipping Jehovah, and you will end with Baal and Moloch. Refuse to hear God's pleadings and you will sell your freedom, and become the lowest and only real kind of slave — the bondsman of evil." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

The penalties of disobedience to God fall as surely on nations as on individuals. "Bismarck said, 'A people that gives up its God is like a people that gives up its territory. It is a lost people.' To banish God from the counsels of government, to shut him out of the education of youth, to build homes without him, is to write concerning the people of our future the record of Israel." — *Rev. A. E. Dunning, D.D.*

LESSON XIII. — March 26.

REVIEW.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Jehovah is righteous in all his ways, And gracious in all his works.* — Ps. 145 : 17.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 130.
Primary Topic : FAVORITE STORIES OF THE QUARTER.
Memory Verse : For with Jehovah there is lovingkindness. Ps. 130 : 7.
Junior Topic : ISRAEL'S HEROIC PROPHETS.
Memory Verse : Josh. 1 : 7.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : ESTIMATE OF ELIJAH, ELISHA, JONAH, AND AMOS.
Topic for Young People and Adults : SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE QUARTER'S LESSONS.

A number of different forms of review are here given, that the teacher may use a method suited to the age and qualifications of his class. Some teachers will prefer to combine two of the methods, or to take features from several of them.

I. FRUIT OF AN ANCIENT TREE.

For this form of review the teacher will draw, or get an artist friend to draw, the picture of a tree something like the picture on page 102. Make it large, two feet high at least, so that you may have room for good-sized fruit. Color its leaves green. The fruit will be twelve in number, one for each lesson of the quarter. Those for Lessons 1, 5, 11, and 12 will be colored brown representing decayed fruit, as those lessons describe the evil condition of Israel, with little or no hope of improvement. The other eight fruits will be colored bright red, yellow, or green, or a mixture of these

colors. Make them of pasteboard cut in the shape of apples, and each fruit will have a back, hinged to it. Between the front and the back of each fruit place a series of questions getting at the heart of that lesson, its events and its teachings, each question written on a separate slip of paper. Fold the questions to fit in between the front and the back of the fruit, and number them in the order in which they are to be read and answered by the pupils. Print on the front of each fruit the number of the lesson with the initials of the lesson's title; thus: "5. E. in N.'s V." Fasten the whole together with a wire clip at the top and pin it to a branch of the tree or fasten it there with a hook. The fruits will be taken down in the order of the lessons and the questions opened and answered. If there is time, review again by drawing the questions from a general heap and answering them in any order in which they happen to come. To this end, write each question so that it will stand alone, independent of others.

II. A SOCIAL-TEACHINGS REVIEW.

For the older classes the Lesson Committee suggests as the review topic, "Social Teachings of the Quarter's Lessons." If you wish to carry out this suggestion, you may assign the following topics, one for each lesson, to twelve members of your class, each to speak for three minutes on his subject, or read a three-minute essay on it:

Lesson I. Idolatry in Modern Society.
Lesson II. The Duty of Private and Public Charity.
Lesson III. The Individual Confronting the Sins of Society.
Lesson IV. Quiet Modes of Effecting Reforms.
Lesson V. The Land Question.
Lesson VI. Rewards of Disinterested Public Service.
Lesson VII. Hospitality in Modern Life.
Lesson VIII. Moral Leprosy of To-day.
Lesson IX. The Rights and Powers of Minorities.
Lesson X. International Responsibility.
Lesson XI. Our National Sins.
Lesson XII. God's Providence in History.

III. A QUESTION-PICTURE REVIEW.

This form of review will be suited to the younger classes, and the teacher will use the beautiful series of Lesson Pictures published by the W. A. Wilde Company, Boston. Fasten the pictures in order on a board or a large sheet of pasteboard. Prepare for each lesson a few simple questions on the people and events of the lesson, with its chief teaching for the children. Write each question on a separate slip of paper, and pin these questions, writing side down, across the picture one below the other, so that they hide the picture entirely. The pupils will detach each slip in turn, read the question aloud, and answer it ; thus the picture will be disclosed. Pupils will retain the slips that each has answered, and will count at the end of the recitation to see which has the largest number.

IV. THE FOUR-PROPHETS REVIEW.

All but two of the lessons of the quarter are connected directly with the life and work of four great prophets, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, and Amos ; and the remaining lessons are connected indirectly. Each prophet may be considered under three aspects : (1) His work for Jehovah ; (2) His words for Jehovah ; (3) His character and influence. This gives you twelve topics, which may be distributed among the members of the class, each to discuss his topic in a little essay or talk, strictly limited to three minutes.

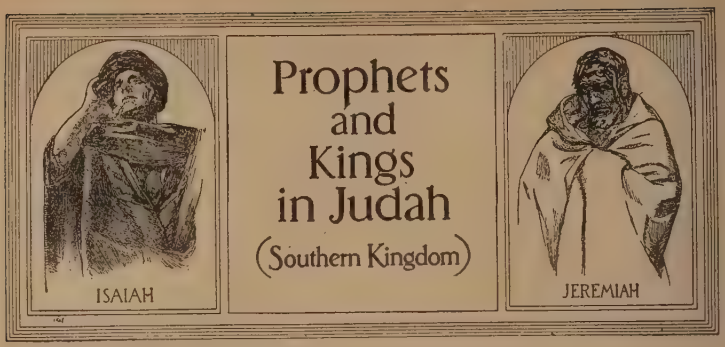
V. A FAVORITE-STORIES REVIEW.

This form of review is suggested for the Primary Department. You may conduct it by assigning to the different members of the class, in advance, the various stories of the quarter, asking each to come ready to tell the class the story assigned to him. Or, you may tell the class in advance that any member may be called upon to tell any of the stories of the quarter. When called upon he will proceed until he fails to remember what comes next, or makes a mistake, when another pupil will be asked to take up the story.

VI. A FIVE-POINT CONTEST.

For this form of review appoint two leaders, who will divide the class into two sides. Each side will meet during the week to study the lessons of the quarter and to prepare a list of questions on them dealing with five points in each lesson : (1) the persons, such as " What prophet of Judah preached in Israel ? " (2) the places, such as " What event of our quarter's lessons took place on Mount Horeb ? " (3) the events, such as " What happened to Naaman after he obeyed Elisha ? " (4) the quotations, such as " Who said, ' If Jehovah be God, follow him '? " (5) the teachings, such as " What event of our quarter's lessons is a warning against covetousness ? " The teacher should examine each list to see that all the questions are fair ones and perfectly clear.

In the recitation period the leader of one side will ask a question of the other side. The leader of that side will then consult with his side before answering. Then the second leader will ask a question, and so it will go, the leaders asking all the questions and answering them only after consulting their side. No books or papers are to be used, only the lists of questions. The teacher will keep the record of correct answers for each side under the five heads given above. The side which answers the most questions on persons wins the first point, and so on. The victorious side is the one that wins the most points.



SECOND QUARTER.

APRIL 2 — JUNE 25, 1922.

(Second Quarter of a Nine-Months Course.)

LESSON I (14)*. — April 2.

ASA RELIES ON GOD. — 2 Chronicles 14 : 1–12.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee.* — 2 Chron. 14 : 11.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 145 : 1–10.
Reference Material: 2 Chron. 14 : 13–16; Isa. 41 : 10–13.
Primary Topic: A King Who Trusted God.
Memory Verse: Help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee. 2 Chron. 14 : 11.
Junior Topic: God Helping Asa.
Memory Verse: 2 Chron. 14 : 11.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Ruler Who Relied on God.
Topic for Young People and Adults: The Source of Personal and National Power.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will get a clear understanding of the lesson from the use of the sand map. Show Jerusalem and the hill country, marking Bethlehem and Hebron, and hollowing out ravines running down to the plain on the west where Mareshah will be indicated and Gerar beyond. Write a series of questions on Asa, his reforms, and his preparations for defence. Put these questions on a series of strips of cardboard sharpened at one end and stick these up in a circle around Jerusalem. Questions on Zerah and his expeditions will in like manner be placed around Mareshah, and questions on Asa's prayer and victory will be placed in the ravine. These questions will be taken up one by one and answered by the pupils.

The Older Classes will make a study of trust in God as a source of personal and national power. Ask one member of the class to come ready to report on the lesson events as relating to the political history of Judah; another, as relating to the religious history of Judah. Ask a business man to apply the teachings of the lesson to the problems of his calling, and a hand laborer to do the same, and a professional man, and a housewife. Make use of a map. Discuss the question how far, in individual and national life, preparation for emergencies is consistent with implicit trust in God.

* Numbers in parentheses throughout the quarter give the continuation numbers of the course.

THE POOL OF HEZEKIAH — JERUSALEM.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — According to Professor Beecher, B. C. 949. Rehoboam's reign began B. C. 982; Abijah's, 965; Asa's, 962. According to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* these dates are B. C. 933, 915, and 913.

Place. — Mareshah, west of Hebron in the lowlands of Judah; a ravine near by, running down from the highlands.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Large armies in ancient and modern times.
Weapons of ancient warfare.
Famous victories of a few over many.
The character of Asa.
Asa's prayer as a model.
The Bible argument for trust in God.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Trust in God: What It Did for Asa and Will Do for Us.

I. REHOBOAM AND ABIJAH — TWO FOOLISH KINGS.
The books of Chronicles.
Apostasy of Judah.
Wars and misfortunes.

II. ASA'S PRUDENT PREPARATIONS, vs. 1–8.
The preparation of reform.
The preparation of forts and army.
Our preparation for the battle of life.

III. ASA'S CONQUERING TRUST, vs. 9–12.
The enemy from Egypt.
Help from Jehovah.
The prophecy of Azariah.
A national covenant.
What trust in God will do for us.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

For the conservative view of the books of Chronicles see Professor Beecher in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; for the radical view see Smith and Driver in *The Encyclopædia Biblica*; for an intermediate view see Prof. Francis Brown in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*. *Commentaries* on Chronicles by Bennett (*Expositor's Bible*), Harvey-Jellie (*The New Century Bible*), Barnes (*Cambridge Bible*), Murphy (*Handbooks for Bible Classes*), Rawlinson (*Speaker's Commentary*), Barker (*Pulpit Commentary*), Curtis (*International Critical Commentary*), Parker, Butler, Maclaren (*Expositions*), Peake, Gray, Dummelow, Ellicott, etc. *Histories* by Edersheim, Geikie, Rawlinson, etc. *Sermons* by Hodges (*Year of Grace, Advent to Trinity*) and Prof. Austin Phelps (*Studies of the Old Testament*).

I. REHOBOAM AND ABIJAH — TWO FOOLISH KINGS. THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES are entitled in the Hebrew Bible "The Words of the Days," like our "diary" or "journal." The Greek translation has a title meaning "Things That Have Been Left Untold," bringing out the fact that Chronicles is supplementary to the books of Samuel and Kings, somewhat as John is supplementary to the other three Gospels. Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah form one historical work or group of works, by one writer or group of writers. The last two verses of Chronicles are the same as the first three verses of Ezra.

The first nine chapters of Chronicles are made up chiefly of genealogies; the rest of the first book tells the story of David; the second book gives an account of David's successors. Parts of Chronicles are copied word for word from Samuel or Kings, or paraphrased and condensed from those books; but most of Chronicles is new matter, gathered from a great range of sources (the Chronicler names more than twenty-five of his sources — a considerable library), all of them now lost. The Chronicler was led by the Spirit to preserve a large amount of matter concerning the temple and its officers and services, and much that strikingly sets forth God's gracious dealings with his people, for all of which the reverent reader is deeply grateful. Radical scholars think that Chronicles was written about B. C. 250 or later; the conservative opinion is that the books were completed before the death of Nehemiah (about B. C. 415), whose library described in Second Maccabees 2 : 13–15 is exactly the kind of library the Chronicler constantly refers to.

THE REIGNS OF REHOBOAM AND ABIJAH. After Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, had lost the greater part of his kingdom by his foolish pride (see Lesson I of last quarter), he wished to wage war with Jeroboam and the ten northern tribes, to compel them to return to his allegiance. This vain purpose was frustrated by the wise advice of the prophet Shemaiah, and from that time until the exile the people of God were divided.

Rehoboam, however, feared an attack from Jeroboam, and judged that Egypt, which had shielded Jeroboam in his exile, would be his ally in such a war; therefore Rehoboam strengthened his defences, especially those toward Egypt. Then came three years of peace, during which the Levites and many other pious people, shocked by the idolatries which Jeroboam had established, emigrated from the northern kingdom and settled in Judah. But, alas! the influence of Rehoboam's education under his heathen mother was too strong, and the worst abominations of heathenism soon crept into Judah also. In the fifth year of his reign, when the apostasy of Judah was complete, it was punished by the much-feared attack from

1. So Ă bĭ'-jăh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Ā'-sȧ his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years.

2. And Ā'-sȧ did that which was good and right in the eyes of Jehovah his God:

3. For he took away the foreign altars, and the high places, and brake down the pillars, and hewed down the Ă-shē'-rĭm,

---

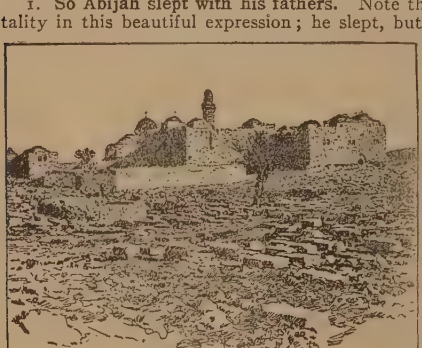
Jeroboam and Egypt. Trembling, Rehoboam remained shut up in Jerusalem while the enemy captured town after town. The wretched king saw his sad error, and humbled himself before God. In response, Shemaiah told him that the Lord would accept his repentance, but that he must become the vassal of Egypt. This came to pass, Rehoboam stripping his palace and the temple itself of their golden treasures to pay the heavy ransom. So the Egyptians marched away with their booty.

After this siege Rehoboam continued to reign for twelve more years (seventeen years in all), fighting almost continually with Jeroboam, but with no decisive results. His character was vacillating and weak, now encouraging idolatry, now repenting before Jehovah. He had many wives, but his favorite was his cousin, Absalom's granddaughter, Maachah, an evil woman whose son, Abijah, succeeded Rehoboam as king.

Abijah reigned between two and three years, his one outstanding act being a desperate effort, with 400,000 men, to subdue the Northern Kingdom and end the schism. Jeroboam brought against him an army twice as large as his, and the men of Judah were nearly defeated, when suddenly the tide of battle turned with great slaughter of the Israelites. Several Israelite towns were taken, but Abijah soon died and nothing came of his victory. He continued in the sins of his fathers, permitted idolatry in its worst forms, and, though nominally a worshiper of the true God, allowed himself and his people to fall into all sorts of heathen abominations.

II. **ASA'S PRUDENT PREPARATIONS,** vs. 1–8. "Asa, the son of Abijah and grandson of Rehoboam, is a king whose reign offers a strong contrast in almost every respect to those of his father and grandfather. In length it exceeded every other Jewish reign except two (Uzziah's and Manasseh's). In a military point of view it was distinguished, and in the matter of religion its character and tendency were directly opposite to that of the two reigns immediately preceding it." — *Rawlinson.*

1. **So Abijah slept with his fathers.** Note the indication of a belief in immortality in this beautiful expression; he slept, but he was to wake some day. **And they buried him in the city of David.** Jerusalem, called David's city because he conquered it from the Jebusites, and made it his capital, where he lived and died. **And Asa his son reigned in his stead.** His name was fitting: it probably means "healer." **In his days the land was quiet ten years;** that is, during the earlier part of his reign. This peaceful time was doubtless due to his father Abijah's great victory over Jeroboam.



David's Tomb.
Jerusalem.

2. **And Asa did that which was good and right.** Literally, "the good and the straight." The next two verses tell what good and righteous acts are specially referred to. **In the eyes of Jehovah his God.** It does not so much matter whether what we do is good in our own eyes and the eyes of other men as whether God calls it good.

3. **For he took away the foreign altars.** The altars of foreign gods. "The enumeration that follows vividly suggests the incongruous rabble of gods which had

4. And commanded Judah to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.

5. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the sun-images : and the kingdon was quiet before him.

Asa Destroys the Altars. From an old print.

taken the place of the one Lord. How vainly we try to make up for his absence from our hearts by a multitude of finite delights and helpers! Their multiplicity proves the insufficiency of each and all." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **And the high places.** Sanctuaries on hilltops dedicated to heathen gods. Those dedicated to Jehovah (and some of them were) he did not destroy (2 Chron. 15 : 17; 1 Kings 15 : 14). **And brake down the pillars.** These were upright stones, rough and unhewn, originally used as altars, often worshiped as the abode of deities. **And hewed down the Asherim.** "Wooden poles set up like the stone pillars at sanctuaries. Their meaning is obscure, possibly a substitute for a tree as a residence of deity, or possibly originally boundary posts regarded later as sacred. It has also been thought that there was a Canaanite goddess Asherah, equivalent to the great Semitic goddess Astarte, whose symbol or idol was the Asherah post; but on this scholars are not agreed." — *International Critical Commentary.* We learn from 1 Kings 15 : 13 that in this reform Asa had to contend against his mother's influence — something especially difficult to do in the East, where mothers are so revered. It was thus, as Christ said, with the Christians, a man's foes being of his own household.

4. **And commanded Judah to seek Jehovah.** Asa advocated a religion which was not merely negative, forbidding idolatry, but also positive, requiring worship of the one God and obedience to his commands. All true religion has these two sides. **The God of their fathers.** A strong argument is implied here : God had proved himself to their fathers to be a God of power and of love; he would be the same to them if they would obey him. **And to do the law and the commandment.** Thus the law given to Moses is described in Ex. 24 : 12. Asa could command his people to do these things, but he could not make them keep God's law; only the love of God in their hearts could bring that about.

5. **Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places.** The reason for the variation in 1 Kings probably is "that the one account tells what Asa attempted and commanded, and the other records the imperfect way in which his orders were carried out. They would be obeyed in Jerusalem and its neighborhood, but in many a secluded corner the old rites would be observed."— *Alexander Maclaren.*

And the sun-images. According to some scholars, "the images of Baal, who in the confusion of the heathen mind was identified with the sun." — *Prof. James G. Murphy.* According to others "the Hebrew word is of uncertain meaning, and it is possible that no kind of image is meant, but rather the *hearth* on which the sacred fire was kept." — *William Emery Barnes, D.D* **And the kingdom was quiet before him : that is, under his rule and oversight.**

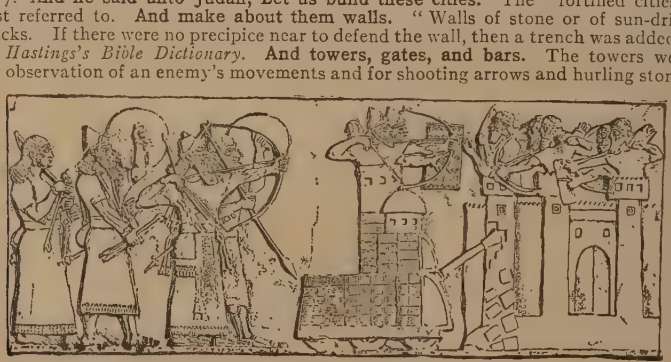
6. And he built fortified cities in Judah ; for the land was quiet, and he had no war in those years, because Jehovah had given him rest.

7. For he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars ; the land is yet before us, because we have sought Jehovah our God; we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered.

From a photograph by Wilson.
A High Place of Baal.

6. **And he built fortified cities in Judah.** We are not told what cities he fortified. "A general system of defence, like that of Rehoboam who fortified as many as fifteen cities, seems to be indicated." — *Ellicott.* **For the land was quiet, and he had no war in those years.** The ten years at the beginning of his reign, mentioned in verse 1. We are told in 1 Kings that Baasha, king of Israel, threatened war, but Asa persuaded Ben-hadad, king of Syria, to invade Israel from the north, and when Baasha withdrew to meet the Syrians, Asa built two forts on his northern frontier to protect himself in the future. **Because Jehovah had given him rest.** "The chronicler brings out strongly the truth which runs through his whole book, — namely, the connection between honoring Jehovah and national prosperity. Modern critics charge him with writing with a bias, but he learned the 'bias' from God's own declarations, and had it confirmed by observation, reflection, and experience. . . . Asa's experience embodies a truth which is substantially fulfilled in nations and in individuals; for obedience brings rest, often outward tranquility, always inward calm." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

7. **And he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities.** The "fortified cities" just referred to. **And make about them walls.** "Walls of stone or of sun-dried bricks. If there were no precipice near to defend the wall, then a trench was added." — *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.* **And towers, gates, and bars.** The towers were for observation of an enemy's movements and for shooting arrows and hurling stones



From a cast in the Boston Art Museum.
King Besieging a City.

and other weapons at an advantage. Before the battering-ram was invented, the gateways were the only places where an entrance into the city could be effected. They were protected by flanking towers and by strong doors of wood sometimes

8. And Ā'-sà had an army that bare bucklers and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these were mighty men of valor.

9. And there came out against them Zē'-răh the Ethiopian with an army of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and he came unto Mă-rē'-shăh.

---

plated with metal or even of solid stone, secured with bars of wood or metal which fitted into clamps on the door-posts. **The land is yet before us.** Open to us, free from foes. **Because we have sought Jehovah our God. . . and he hath given us rest.** This is the third time in this brief passage that this thought is insisted upon. **So they built and prospered.** Prospered in their building, were not hindered in the progress by any foe.

8. **And Asa had an army that bare bucklers and spears.** The large shield is meant here. It was "no mere hasty levy of half-armed peasants with scythes and axes." — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.* **Out of Judah three hundred thousand.** "These numbers accord well with those of 2 Chron. 13 : 3." — *Speaker's Commentary.* **And out of Benjamin.** This little tribe contributed a wonderfully large number of men; it was always famous as a tribe of warriors. **That bare shields and drew bows.** "The shield of these bowmen was smaller than that of the spearmen." — *International Critical Commentary.* These were the light-armed men. No mention is made of chariots. **Two hundred and fourscore thousand.** Asa's total force was 580,000 warriors. His father, Abijah, had an army of only 400,000. **All these were mighty men of valor.** As is soon to be seen, great numbers do not *always* mean valor.

OUR PREPARATION FOR THE BATTLE OF LIFE. "Asa's warlike preparations were possibly intended, like those of the Triple Alliance, to enable him to maintain peace; but if so, their sequel did not illustrate the maxim, *Si vis pacem, para bellum.*" — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.* "If you wish for peace, prepare for war" has often proved fallacious, and never more fallacious than in the World War; but in the "battle of life," preparation prevents many a disaster and never invites the struggle against which preparation is made. No one is well prepared for this warfare until he is armed with good health, a well-furnished mind, and a noble character. Having these three, he will have a host of friends, opportunities for advancement will come to him, and he will be equal, in God's strength, for any emergency. Youth is the time for making this preparation, and the determination to make it is the best result that could come from to-day's lesson.

III. **ASA'S CONQUERING TRUST,** vs. 9–12. Very likely the standing army that Asa had raised aroused the fears or excited the emulation of the surrounding kings, who resolved to destroy this dangerous growth. Asa's preparations looked to them like preparations for aggression rather than defence. That is always the peril of great armaments.

9. **And there came out against them.** Against Asa's warriors that have just been enumerated. **Zerah the Ethiopian** (or, Cushite). "It is exceedingly difficult to determine who this invader was. Usually he is identified with Osorkon I of Egypt, a ruler of the twenty-second or Bubastic dynasty; but Osorkon was not an Ethiopian." — *New Century Bible.* "Cush (Gen. 10 : 7) was the ancestor of certain Arabian tribes (including Saba), and Arabians and Cushites are mentioned as neighbors (2 Chron. 21 : 16). It is therefore not improbable that the leader of the inroad was an Arabian (Sabean) and not an Ethiopian." — *Cambridge Bible.* **With an army of a thousand thousand.** Perhaps this should not be taken literally, but as meaning that the host was too great to number. Yet "ancient sovereigns were followed by most of their subjects capable of bearing arms, who were attracted by the hope of plunder. Xerxes assembled nearly three millions for the invasion of Greece. Darius Codomannus had 1,040,000 men at Arbela." — *Handbooks for Bible Classes.* **And three hundred chariots.** A comparatively small number, which may have been mentioned because Asa had no chariots, or because this part of the army came from Egypt. The Egyptian chariot was light, made of wood, and was open from behind so that it could be mounted easily. "The flat bottom was formed of a kind of network, consisting of interlaced thongs or rope, which gave it elasticity and mitigated the jolting." — *Wilkinson.* Usually two persons occupied it, one to

10. Then Ā'-sà went out to meet him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zĕph'-ă-thăh at Mă-rē'-shăh.

11. And Ā'-sà cried unto Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, there is none besides thee to help, between the mighty and him that hath no strength: help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we come against this multitude. O Jehovah, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

---

drive, the other to use the bow or spear. If one person alone used it, the reins were fastened around his waist and the whip was tied to his wrist. "The occupants of a chariot nearly always stood. In rare instances the car was provided with a seat in which the royal personage sat." — *Encyclopædia Biblica.* **And he came unto Mareshah.** A town west of Hebron in the lowlands of Judah. It was destroyed by the Parthians, and on the site some remarkable tombs have been discovered.

10. **Then Asa went out to meet him.** He had walls and towers to hide in, but he chose the more manly course. **And they set the battle in array.** Arranged their forces for the combat. **In the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.** The Septuagint (Greek) translation reads "in the ravine to the north of Mareshah," and this may be the correct reading, since no such name as Zephathah has been recovered in the neighborhood. A number of ravines come down here from the highlands of Judah, and in one of them a small force could withstand a much greater number.

11. **And Asa cried unto Jehovah his God.** First he did the best he could with the means God had given him, and then he prayed God to bless that means. This is the right order. "This prayer contains the very essence of what ought to be the Christian attitude in reference to all the conditions and threatening dangers and conflicts of life." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Illustration. "Asa and his staff must have felt, as they looked over the roods of glittering spears, as our own Washington felt in Valley Forge, in the most dismal winter of the Revolution. He seems to himself to have come to the place of extreme catastrophe. Like the 'Father of his Country,' the Jewish king betakes himself to prayer." — *Austin Phelps.*

And said, Jehovah, there is none besides thee to help. Asa was outnumbered, two to one; no wonder he felt powerless. So is the Christian church in the face of the immense mass of heathenism abroad and the selfishness and worldliness at home. So is the individual Christian when confronted with his tasks and struggling against his sins. "When I am weak, then am I strong," said Paul. We are not strong till we are conscious of our own weakness. We get no help till we discard the false help of philosophy, of self-reliance, of earthly wisdom and strength, and flee to the only Refuge in the universe, Jesus Christ who is our Strength. **Between the mighty and him that hath no strength.** That is, when the weak and helpless is attacked by the mighty. **Help us, O Jehovah our God.** It is not enough to be conscious of our weakness and God's power; the next step is to get in touch with God's power. We are like an electric motor, motionless and powerless. We know that through the wire overhead a mighty flow of energy is rushing. Now let us practise that knowledge by running the wire of prayer between our waiting motor and the rushing, willing current overhead. **For we rely on thee.** "Trust thyself," said Emerson; "all hearts vibrate to that iron string." But the iron string rusts, it does not vibrate long. "I can do all things," said Paul, "through him who strengtheneth me"; and in that faith Paul himself, and multitudes like him, have won their mighty victories through the ages. **And in thy name are we come against this multitude.** "In thy name" means having God's name on their tongues, daring to shout it out before the heathen; it also means "in thy spirit," for God's name involves all that God is. If we believe God, and have taken his name upon us by joining his church, then we are in the majority though we are alone with God, and we shall dare to go against any multitude that is without God. **O Jehovah, thou art our God.** Asa identified himself with God; God was *his*. He could say that, because he was *God's*. Thus Christ said of his disciples that he was in them and they were in him. Thus Paul could say that all things belong to the Christian because the Christian belongs to Christ, the owner of all things. **Let not man prevail against thee.** Asa had so thoroughly bound up his cause with God's cause that if Zerah prevailed against him, Zerah would be prevailing against God. This was not presumption: it was simply taking

12. So Jehovah smote the Ethiopians before Ā'-sà, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.

God at his blessed word. Thus when a delegation, waiting on Lincoln during the dark days of the Civil War, expressed the hope that God would be on their side, Lincoln answered, "I am not so concerned about that, gentlemen, as that we should be on God's side!" That side always wins.

12. **So Jehovah smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah.** No credit is given to Asa and his army by the sacred historian, but all the praise is given to God. "These victories over superior numbers may easily be paralleled or surpassed by numerous striking examples from secular history. The odds were greater at Agincourt, where at least sixty thousand French were defeated by not more than twenty thousand Englishmen; at Marathon the Greeks routed a Persian army ten times as numerous as their own; in India English generals have defeated innumerable hordes of native warriors. When the small craft that made up Elizabeth's fleet defeated the huge Spanish galleons and galleasses, and the storms of the northern sea finished the work of destruction, the grateful piety of Protestant England felt that its foes had been destroyed by the breath of the Lord: *Afflavit Deus et dissipantur.*" — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.* **And the Ethiopians fled.** Asa pursued them to Gerar, a town in the Philistine plain south of Gaza, where Abraham encountered Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen. 20 and 26). A fleeing army so vast in size would leave behind much spoil — tents, sheep, camels, utensils and weapons of many kinds, besides garments thrown aside. In addition, Asa captured and spoiled all the towns in the neighborhood of Gerar, which were panic-stricken at his onset. These were "Philistine cities hostile to Judah. Perhaps they had helped Zerah." — *Ellicott.* The account of Asa's reign in 1 Kings does not mention this battle, but it does refer to great spoils dedicated in the temple (1 Kings 15 : 15).

THE PROPHECY OF AZARIAH. Azariah, the son of Oded, was a prophet. Moved by God's Spirit, he went out to meet Asa as the victorious king was returning, and spoke words that have never ceased to ring in the hearts of God's people: "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." Then he went on to exhort Asa to be faithful to the one true God, and courageous in destroying all idolatry. It was like the "Recessional" with which Kipling exhorted England in her triumph:

> "Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet
> Lest we forget, lest we forget."

A NATIONAL COVENANT. Encouraged by the prophet Azariah, Asa redoubled his efforts to purify the land from idols, and rebuilt the great altar of burnt offerings in Solomon's temple that had fallen to decay. Devout Jews came to Judah out of the northern tribes, and out of Simeon to the south, and Asa conducted a great religious festival, with sacrifices of many animals captured from Zerah. At the close of this festival the people solemnly renewed their ancient covenant with Jehovah, promising to seek him with all their heart and soul. This promise was made "with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets," and they all "rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them." It was one of the most inspiring events in the nation's history.

WHAT TRUST IN GOD WILL DO FOR US. Trust in God is based on humility. "Just as you always find the lakes in the hollows, so you will always find the grace of God coming into men's hearts to strengthen them and make them victorious, when there has been the preparation of the lowered estimate of one's self. Hollow out your heart by self-distrust, and God will fill it with the flashing waters of his strength bestowed." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Trust in God is based on necessity. "Said Whitefield in one of the crises of his life, 'I have thrown myself blindfold into His almighty arms.' Said Dr. Griffin in a similar emergency, 'I feel that God is all that is left to me.' So Luther felt in the great crisis of his life: 'Here stand I for God: I can do no other.'" — *Austin Phelps.*

Trust in God is based on his ownership of us. "By the right of creation *we belong to God.* By the right of faithful and undying friendship *we belong to God.* By the right of eternal redemption *we belong to God.* By the right of purchase with the blood

of Christ *we belong to God*. Will God desert his own with such rights as these?" — *Austin Phelps*.

"As you grow ready for it, somewhere or other you will find what is needful for you." — *George Macdonald*.

"Whatever happens to me each day is my daily bread, provided I do not refuse to take it from thy hand, and so feed upon it." — *Fénelon*.

"A trusting mind is not a lax mind. If a boat is being towed, the rope is taut."

"Build a little fence of trust
Around to-day;
Fill its space with loving work
And therein stay.
Peer not through the sheltering bars
At to-morrow:
God will help thee bear what comes
Of joy or sorrow." — *Mary F. Butts*.

Asa's victory of trust may be the victory of every one of us. "Asa's battle is our own battle, against pain and against sin. The multitude is the crowd of our impending failures, the assembly of all obstructing difficulties. Thus we stand confronting them. Thus we pray, taking that old prayer upon our lips and repeating that old battle cry of faith and courage: 'Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest in thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude.'" — *George Hodges*.

"I am trusting thee, Lord Jesus:
Never let me fall;
I am trusting thee forever,
And for all." — *Frances Ridley Havergal*.

LESSON II (15). — April 9.

THE LORD PRESERVES JOASH. — 2 Kings 11 : 1–17.

PRINT vs. 1–4, 11–17.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Jehovah preserveth all them that love him.* — Ps. 145 : 20.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 145 : 10–21.
Reference Material: 2 Kings 11 : 18–20; 2 Chron. 23 : 1–21; Matt. 2 : 13–23
Primary Topic: GOD TAKES CARE OF A BOY.
Memory Verse: I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. Ps. 23 : 4.
Junior Topic: HOW A BOY BECAME KING.
Memory Verse: Ps. 145 : 20.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: A BOY SAVED FOR A GREAT CAREER.
Topic for Young People and Adults: THE SECRET OF PERSONAL AND NATIONAL SAFETY.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will find the lesson much more vivid if you use a model of Solomon's temple, with the walls of the courts and with a model of the palace near by. Make one yourself from cardboard, wood, putty, or paper pulp. Better, set the members of your class to making one, holding a meeting for that purpose during the week. Questions in regard to Athaliah and the massacre may be written on slips of paper and placed in the palace court, and questions on Jehosheba, Jehoiada, and the training and coronation of Joash may be placed in the temple court. The chief teaching is that of God's care for his children.

The Intermediate and Senior Classes will be interested in the stirring details of the story, and in the use of a plan of the temple and palace with the courts. Aim to set the young folks to talking about their purpose in life. What throne will each seek to win? How will he go about it?

The Older Classes will make this a study of the religious education of the young. What perils attend them? What kingdoms await them? How are they to be led into their kingdoms? After a discussion of the lesson event conducted by the teacher, you may well have discussions of these three questions, each led by a different person with special preparation. One may be a father, one a mother, one a teacher.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The beginning of Jehoshaphat's reign (Beecher) was B. C. 921; of Jehoram's, 900; of Ahaziah's, 893; of Athaliah's, 893; of Joash's, 887. Beecher places the marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah at B. C. 916, and the birth of Ahaziah the following year.

Place. — The temple and royal palace in Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Athaliah compared with Jezebel.
The character of Jehoiada.
Coronation customs of Judah compared with those of England.
Structure of temple and palace.
Use of trumpets in the Bible.
Training of the boy king.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Secret of Personal and National Safety.

I. Jehoshaphat to Joash.
Jehoshaphat's rightness and wrongness.
Jehoram's wickedness and disasters.
Ahaziah's unfortunate alliance.

II. The Preservation of Joash, vs. 1–3.
Cruel Athaliah.
Courageous Jehosheba
A boyhood in hiding.
Saving our youth.

III. The Crowning of Joash, vs. 4–17.
Jehoiada's spirited plan.
The plan carried out.
Athaliah executed.
The covenant renewed.
Placing our youth on their thrones.
The secret of safety.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Edersheim's *History of Israel and Judah.* Rawlinson's *The Kings of Israel and Judah.* Stanley's *Jewish Church.* Geikie's *Old Testament Characters* and *Landmarks of Old Testament History.* Miller's *Devotional Hours.* Maclaren's *Expositions.* Talmage's *Sermons on the Holy Land.* Albertson's *College Sermons.* Harper's *The Making of Men.* Bruce Barton's *More Power to You.* Horace Mann's *Thoughts for a Young Man.* McClure's *Possibilities.* Richards's *God's Choice of Men.* Hillis's *The Investment of Influence.* King's *Religion as Life.* Drummond's *The Ideal Life.*

I. **JEHOSHAPHAT TO JOASH.** 1. Jehoshaphat. Asa's successor as king of Judah was his son Jehoshaphat, who reigned for twenty-five years, including five years when he was associate with his father on the throne. Jehoshaphat, in spite of some serious errors, was a good king. He upheld the worship of Jehovah, and made several strong efforts to put down idolatry. He sent princes and Levites to various parts of his kingdom, to instruct the people out of the law of Moses. He built ships, established a system of law courts, and strengthened his military defences. For all this God blessed him, and when he was attacked by a formidable array of Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites from the southeast, he went out to battle claiming God's promises and singing songs of thanksgiving, and God gave him the victory without his striking a blow.

Jehoshaphat's great mistake was his too close association with Ahab and his wicked family, a mistake which arose from his laudable desire to end the strife between the two countries which had lasted for so long. To this end he did a dreadful thing, he married his son Jehoram to Ahab's (and probably Jezebel's) daughter Athaliah, doubtless an idolatress, and certainly a woman of base character. Also he joined Ahab in military expeditions, and in a commercial venture at sea, rebuked by his prophets, and getting no good from the alliance.

2. Jehoram (not to be confounded with Jehoram of Israel). When Jehoshaphat died at the age of sixty, he left his son Jehoram (or Joram) to ascend the throne of Judah. His wife Athaliah had led him into the depths of heathenism, and as soon as he became king he showed his cruel character by murdering all his brothers and some other princes of Judah. His reign of eight years was troubled and unfortunate, as might have been expected. The Edomites rebelled and became independent. The city of Libnah did the same. The warriors of Philistia and Arabia overran Judah and even carried away Jehoram's wives and all his children but the youngest son. Elijah, who sent him from Israel a written warning, prophesied the painful disease which finally carried him off to an unwept grave.

3. Ahaziah. During the sickness of Jehoram his son Ahaziah was probably associated with him on the throne, and after his death he succeeded him. He was twenty-two years old then, and he reigned only a year. His mother, Athaliah, was his counsellor in wickedness. Like his father, he was involved with the evil house of Ahab, going with his uncle, King Jehoram of Israel, to fight against the Syrians. Ahaziah was with Jehoram when Jehu revolted against the latter, and when Jehu slew Jehoram he also killed the king of Judah.

II. **THE PRESERVATION OF JOASH,** vs. 1–3. The most interesting story of the Old Testament is almost universally agreed to be that of the preservation of the

1. Now when Ăth-ă-lī'-ăh the mother of Ă-hă-zī'-ăh saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.

2. But Jĕ-hŏsh'-ĕ-bà, the daughter of king Jō'-răm, sister of Ă-hă-zī'-ăh, took Jō'-ăsh the son of Ă-hă-zī'-ăh, and stole him away from among the king's sons that were slain, even him and his nurse, *and put them* in the bedchamber; and they hid him from Ăth-ă-lī'-ăh, so that he was not slain;

---

boy Joseph from the cruelty of his brothers and his final exaltation. Another fascinating story, very similar in its outlines and teachings, is that of the boy Joash.

1. **Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah.** As we have already learned, she was the daughter of King Ahab of Israel, and probably her mother was the wicked Phœnician princess, the idolater, Queen Jezebel. At any rate, she shows herself to be as cruel amd unscrupulous as Jezebel. One of the greatest errors of Jehoshaphat was in marrying his son Jehoram to this Princess Athaliah. **Saw that her son was dead.** Ahaziah had been killed, as we have just seen, on a visit to Jehoram, king of Israel, being slain by Jehu when he killed Jehoram. He had paid the penalty of associating with the wicked. At once Athaliah, who had virtually reigned through her influence over her son, saw herself relegated to a much inferior position. Naturally Ahaziah's oldest son, her grandson, would become king, and his mother, Ahaziah's wife, would be the queen mother. "If she did not at once lose all influence, at any rate a counter-influence to hers would have been established; and this might well have been that of the high priest, who was closely connected by marriage with the royal family."— *Pulpit Commentary*. **She arose.** Implying that what she did was done after mature deliberation. **And destroyed all the seed royal.** A terrible deed in itself, doubly heinous when we remember how much, in God's plans, rested upon David's family. These descendants of David, who would have been very numerous by this time, had been severely cut down (1) by the murder of his brothers committed by Jehoram, the father of Ahaziah; (2) by the inroad from Arabia and Philistia which had carried away Jerhoram's wives and children; (3) by the fact that when Jehu killed Ahaziah he killed also some of "the brethen of Ahaziah." But Ahaziah had children, and so probably had some of his brothers, and there were doubtless other members of the family more remote from the succession; all these were included in Athaliah's murderous designs.

GOD'S OVERRULING PROVIDENCE. "Like Herod's, Athaliah's terrible massacre failed of its intention. It was necessary that the infant prince should live, in order that there might be no break in the line of David, for of that line the Messiah must come. No purpose of God can fail. He knows how to deliver his children from peril. We think of the way Moses was preserved for his great mission, and Jesus for his work as the world's Redeemer." — *J. R. Miller*.

2. **But Jehosheba.** Her name means "Jehovah is an oath." **The daughter of King Joram.** Josephus says that she was the daughter of Jehoram by another wife than Athaliah. Her husband (2 Chron. 22 : 11) was Jehoiada, the high priest of Jehovah, and we may be sure that Athaliah would never have allowed *her* daughter to make such a marriage. **Sister of Ahaziah.** His half-sister, not his full sister. **Took Joash the son of Ahaziah.** He was her nephew, and Josephus says he was then a year old. Joash means "Jehovah is strong." **And stole him away from among the king's sons that were slain.** Being aunt of the royal children, she would have ready access to the palace and to their apartments. She did not dare oppose Athaliah openly, but she did what she could by saving from the massacre this baby boy, who could most easily be rescued and kept hidden. **Even him and his nurse.** The nurse must have aided Jehosheba and sympathized with her plan. She probably loved her young charge and wanted to save him. How much the world owes to nurses! **And put them in the bedchamber.** Literally, "*in the chamber of beds, i.e.*, the room in the palace where the mattresses and the coverlets were kept, according to a custom still prevalent in the East. This chamber being unoccupied was the nearest hiding-place at first. The babe was afterwards secretly conveyed within the temple precincts." — *Ellicott*. **And they hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.** "Athaliah's servants may not have been very anxious to carry out her cruel orders to the uttermost, and may have made no very careful search." — *Pulpit Commentary*.

3. And he was with her hid in the house of Jehovah six years. And Ăth-ă-lī'-ăh reigned over the land.

4. And in the seventh year Jĕ-hoi'-ă-dă sent and fetched the captains over hundreds of the Carites and of the guard, and brought them to him into the house of Jehovah; and he made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of Jehovah, and showed them the king's son.

3. **And he was with her hid in the house of Jehovah.** Of course Jehosheba, the wife of the high priest, would have ready access to one of the chambers in the temple that was used for secret purposes, and could often visit the nurse and the young prince there. **Six years.** Those must have been happy years for the child though anxious years for his guardians. "Like the child Samuel, he had the temple for his home, and his first impressions would be of daily sacrifices and white-robed priests. It was a better school for him than if he had been in the palace close by. The opening flower would have been soon besmirched there, but in the holy calm of the temple courts it unfolded unstained. A Christian home should breathe the same atmosphere as surrounded Joash, and it, too, should be a temple, where holy peace rules, and where the first impressions printed on plastic little minds are of God and his service." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **And Athaliah reigned over the land.** "Now at last for more than six years Athaliah enjoyed the delights of undivided power, for which she had sold her heart and conscience. For the first time a queen sat on the Jewish throne, and she a heathen, and only half an Israelite." — *Cunningham Geikie.* Under her reign idolatry must have flourished, and the followers of Jehovah have been persecuted all she dared, though Jehoiada was apparently left in possession of the temple, and was able to continue its services.

Saving Our Youth. "All around us are the imperilled children of a great King. They are born of Almighty parentage, and will come to a throne or a crown, if permitted. But sin, the old Athaliah, goes forth to the massacre. Murderous temptations are out for the assassination. This afternoon, in your Sunday-school class, there will be a prince of God—some one who may yet reign as king forever before the throne, some Cromwell to dissolve a Parliament, some Beethoven to touch the world's harpstrings, some Florence Nightingale to bandage the battle wounds, some John Howard to pour fresh air into the lazaretto, some Miss Dix to soothe the crazed brain, some John Frederick Oberlin to educate the besotted, some David Brainerd to change the Indian's war-whoop to a Sabbath song, some John Wesley to marshal three-fourths of Christendom, some John Knox to make queens turn pale, some Joash to demolish idolatry and strike for the kingdom of heaven." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

"The crises of life, being inevitable, should be made the allies of progress lest they become engines of destruction. These crises come in youth, and it is the high privilege as well as solemn duty of parents and those standing in the relation of parents to prevent shipwreck of the young life or even damage to its craft." — *President W. A. Harper, LL.D.*

Youth is to be saved from low ideals. "I sum up all my desires for you in the single prayer, that you may be kept from the peril of the lesser good." — *President Henry Churchill King.* The danger to-day is, not that youth should not succeed, but that it should be content with less than the best success, which is a life consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ.

III. **THE CROWNING OF JOASH,** vs. 4–17. A modern writer would have enlarged upon the life of young Joash, hidden away in the temple; but the sacred writer is not to be delayed by human gossip, but plunges at the main purpose of his narrative, to trace the unfolding providence of God.

4. **And in the seventh year.** Joash having become seven years old. Doubtless he had been carefully instructed in all the duties of a king. **Jehoiada.** His name means "Jehovah hath known." As high priest of Jehovah and as uncle of the young prince he must have been doubly indignant at Athaliah's usurpation and her evil reign, and impatient for the time to come when he could usher in better days for Judah. **Sent and fetched the captains over hundreds.** Centurions, they were called by the Romans. There were five of these brave and worthy men, and the Chronicler (2 Chron. 23 : 1) carefully preserves their names and their father's names. **Of the Carites** (otherwise spelled Cherethites). Hired soldiers, perhaps from Caria in

11. And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, by the king round about.

Asia Minor, perhaps from Crete. **And of the guard.** Other guards of the palace that were not Carites. **And brought them to him into the house of Jehovah,** the temple. It was at his request that they came, for he would have no authority over them. **And he made a covenant with them.** A solemn agreement binding them to the cause of the young prince. They were doubtless glad to hear that a legitimate ruler was alive, to take the place of the hated usurper. **And took an oath of them in the house of Jehovah.** Jehoiada wished to bind them by every means available, and knew that they might be held by an oath, calling on God to witness to their agreement, even more than by the covenant itself. Of course, we believe that "an honest man's word is as good as his bond." **And showed them the king's son.** The young boy must have been a moving sight, so wonderfully preserved, so greatly wronged, with so high a destiny before him. "What a scene that would be — the seven-year-old child there among all these strange men, the joyful surprise flashing in their eyes, the exultation of the faithful women that had watched him so lovingly, the stern facing of the dangers ahead. Most of the assembly must have thought that none of David's house remained, and that thought would have had much to do with their submitting to Athaliah's usurpation. Now that they saw the true heir, they could not hesitate to risk their lives to set him on his throne. Show a man his true king, and many a tyranny submitted to before becomes at once intolerable. The boy Joash makes Athaliah look very ugly." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

From an old print.
The Boy Joash Crowned King.

JEHOIADA'S PLAN. vs. 5–10. We learn from Chronicles (2 Chron. 23) that Jehoiada sent throughout Judah and summoned secretly to Jerusalem many priests and Levites and secular leaders, and held these in readiness for the revolution. These he armed, when the time came, with spears and shields from an armory which David had established in the temple. Then he arranged that the uprising should take place on a Sabbath. The five captains each had a company. Three of these were to take their position in designated spots around the palace, and two were to act as a guard for the temple and for Joash. The priests and Levites would, of course, be in the temple. Then, on the appointed day, all was ready for the momentous event.

11. **And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand.** They were ready to repel a probable attack from Athaliah's men. **From the right side of the house to the left side of the house.** The guard were drawn up in several rows across the court from wall to wall, the rows running north and south. **Along by the altar and the house.** The front row was close to the sanctuary and the rear row was by the great altar of burnt offering. **By the king round about.** This is anticipatory: when Joash was brought out, the guard closed around him.

12. Then he brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and *gave him* the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, *Long* live the king.

13. And when Ăth-ă-lī'-ăh heard the noise of the guard *and of* the people, she came to the people into the house of Jehovah:

14. And she looked, and, behold, the king stood by the pillar, as the manner was, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. Then Ăth-ă-lī'-ăh rent her clothes, and cried, Treason ! treason !

---

12. **Then he** (Jehoiada) **brought out the king's son.** He is not called "the king" as in the preceding verse, for he had not yet been crowned. And **put the crown upon him.** "The royal crown was generally a circlet of gold, and was often studded with gems." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary.* **And gave him the testimony.** "The high priest laid on the young king's head a copy of the Law, or of some essential portion of it, perhaps the Decalogue, which is often called 'the testimony' (Ex. 16 : 34; 25 : 16, 21, etc.). The object apparently was to show that the king was to rule by law, not arbitrarily — that he was to be, as Dean Stanley says, 'not above, but beneath, the law of his country.'" — *Pulpit Commentary.* "The wearing of an inscription or of a document on a solemn occasion is quite in accordance with Eastern ideas. General Chesney narrates that when he presented the Sultan's firman to a certain sheikh, the sheikh and his Arab guests placed it on their heads as an acknowledgement of duty and a token of respect." — *Cambridge Bible.* **And they made him king.** The verb changes from singular to plural either to include all present, a popular election, or because, as 2 Chron. 23 : 11 says, Jehoiada's sons joined in the ceremony of anointing. **And anointed him, pouring oil on his head.** Prophets, priests, and kings were thus anointed. Christ means "the Anointed One," for he was the supreme Prophet, Priest, and King. Solomon was the last king of Judah before this of whom we read that he was anointed, but it may have been, nevertheless, the usual practice. **And they clapped their hands.** In token of joy, and also to signify that the deed was done and now they cared not who knew it. **And said, Long live the king.** The usual shout when a new king is crowned.

13. **And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people.** She was in the royal palace built by Solomon, a magnificent structure of hewn stone and cedar. It was probably next to the temple on the south, and within the same "Great Court," though each had its own enclosure. It was easy, therefore, for Athaliah to hear the shouting in the temple, and to hurry across to see what was happening. **She came to the people into the house of Jehovah.** Few attendants would be with her, as she had no suspicion of what was going on; and, being an idolater, we may be sure that she seldom entered the temple.

14. **And she looked, and, behold.** "Behold" expresses the queen's intense surprise and consternation. **The king stood by the pillar.** The margin says, "on the platform." It may have been a place by one of the great entrance pillars, "Jachin" and "Boaz," or it may have been a position on a sort of throne where the king customarily stood during sacred ceremonies. At any rate, Joash was set apart from the throng and was conspicuous, so that he at once caught Athaliah's eye. It was like a resurrection from the dead. **As the manner was.** Fulfilling the usual practice. **And the captains and the trumpets by the king.** By "trumpets" is meant the officers whose duty it was to blow the trumpets at a coronation; see for the custom 2 Sam. 15 : 10; 1 Kings 1 : 39; 2 Kings 9 : 13. **And all the people of the land rejoiced.** Representatives from all parts of the kingdom whom Jehoiada had wisely brought together. It is most instructive to note in this ancient record the beginnings of democratic government. **And blew trumpets.** "The Levites, blowing their silver trumpets; the word is that commonly used of those blown by the Levites." — *Edersheim.* **Then Athaliah rent her clothes.** A customary token of horror. **And cried, Treason ! treason !** She showed "the same high spirit that had marked the last days of her mother." — *Stanley.* "But it was not treason — it was the triumph of right against wrong, the defeat of conspiracy and plotting. **She had tried to thwart God, and God met her at the turning.**" — *J. R. Miller.*

15. And Jĕ-hoi'-ă-dà the priest commanded the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth between the ranks; and him that followeth her slay with the sword. For the priest said, Let her not be slain in the house of Jehovah.

16. So they made way for her; and she went by the way of the horses' entry to the king's house: and there was she slain.

17. And Jĕ-hoi'-ă-dà made a covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people; between the king also and the people.

High Priest.

15. **And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds that were set over the host.** As the king was so young, Jehoiada, his uncle, was virtually regent. **And said unto them, Have her forth between the ranks.** The armed men were to form two lines between which she was to pass out, that she might not escape or be rescued. **And him that followeth her slay with the sword.** Whoever followed her would show that he was on her side. **For the priest said, Let her not be slain in the house of Jehovah.** This statement of what Jehoiada had said before shows that the execution of Athaliah was no sudden impulse, but had been determined upon in advance. Indeed, nothing less would have insured Joash's safety, and Athaliah was a murderess many times over; her life was justly forfeit.

16. **So they made way for her.** There was no one to mourn her, we may be sure, in all that company. **And she went by the way of the horses' entry.** Probably a gate in the wall of the court leading to the stables of the palace. "For many a day, when the horses were being unloosed from the chariot, after drawing out young Joash, the fiery steeds would snort and rear passing the place, as they smelt the place of the carnage." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.* **To the king's house.** The royal palace. **And there was she slain.** "Thus perished Athaliah, the last survivor of the house of Omri, so far as we know — a bold, bad woman, but one whose unblenching courage compels our respect." — *Rawlinson.*

17. **And Jehoiada made a covenant.** It was a renewal of the solemn covenant made first at Sinai, confirmed under Joshua after the settlement in Canaan, and repeated under Asa. **Between Jehovah and the king and the people.** The king and his people joined together in promising obedience to Jehovah. **That they should be Jehovah's people.** Under Athaliah the people had been Baal's people rather than Jehovah's. **Between the king also and the people.** The break which Athaliah made in the Davidic succession rendered necessary this renewed promise of allegiance to the legitimate royal family. "The king similarly bound himself to the people, no doubt to rule in accordance with the law as laid down in the book of Deuteronomy." — *Edersheim.* Two acts completed this great event: the people rushed to the temple of Baal which they destroyed, killing Mattan, the priest of Baal; and they conducted Joash in triumph to the palace, where they seated him upon the throne of his fathers.

PLACING OUR YOUTH ON THEIR THRONES. "Every human being is born into the world, *a potential universe.* Prospectively, he is receptive of all sentient enjoyments; capable of all knowledge, and susceptible of all forms of virtue. Insect and worm as he is at birth, there is within him the seminal principle of all grandeur and all glory." — *Horace Mann.* He is placed on his throne in proportion as these vast and varied possibilities are developed in him.

"God has not created men equal; he has made them to differ; but for every differing advantage that he has chosen to confer upon any man, he will hold that man to a strict account." — *Rev. William R. Richards.* It is a terrible thing to have a throne but never ascend it.

"In a little village churchyard in England there is this inscription : '*Here lies Peter Bacon, born a man and died a grocer.*' Take care that it be not written over you, 'Born a man and died a Business man.' Make good, but do not sacrifice, in making good, the gifts of life that are best. Take care to have time for something besides Business — for your family, for good books, for an occasional hour when you merely walk under the stars and think. For in Bethlehem, two thousand years ago, there stood a little inn. And behold, it was so full of Business that the greatest event in the world knocked at its doors and could not come in." — *Bruce Barton.*

"Poor and rich alike have their possibilities. Michael Faraday is a London street boy, living over a stable and loaning newspapers for a penny apiece; then an apprentice in a book-bindery; and then he is one of the most distinguished chemists and natural philosophers of his day. Charles N. Crittenden is in business, burdened with care, and he goes into the slums, sees there wretchedness, and lo! the man of cares has become the man of benevolence, establishing in several cities homes of refuge for girls who are lost to God and to themselves." — *Rev. James G. K. McClure, D.D.*

We cannot ascend our thrones half-heartedly or grudgingly. "'Give, and it shall be given unto you.' Give scant thought and drag but one plank to the stream, and thou shalt receive only a narrow bridge across the brook. Give abundant thought to wires and cables and buttresses, and nature will give the bridge across the Firth of Forth." — *Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis, D.D.*

The Secret of Safety. "This event teaches us how God watches over his purposes and their instruments when they seem nearest to failure, for one poor infant was all that was left of the seed of David; and how, therefore, we are never to despair, even in the darkest hour, of the fulfilment of his promises. It teaches us how much one brave, good man and woman can do to change the whole face of things, and how often there needs but one man to direct and voice the thoughts and acts of the silent multitude, and to light a fire that consumes evil." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Our youth will be saved only as they are brought into allegiance to Jesus Christ. He is the King of kings, and he alone can bring men into their kingdoms and place them on their thrones.

Illustration. "'What is your carpenter doing now?' said a Roman scoffer to an early Christian. 'He is making a coffin for your emperor,' was the reply. And he was. Nero is but a noxious memory. We name our dogs Nero. The Carpenter of Nazareth is on the throne of power." — *Rev. Charles C. Albertson, D.D.*

"There is no middle way in religion — *self* or *Christ*. The quality of the selfishness — intellectual, literary, artistic — the fact that our self's center may be of a superior order of self, does nothing to destroy this grave distinction. It is between *all* self and Christ." — *Henry Drummond.*

LESSON III (16). — April 16.

THE LOVE OF JOASH FOR GOD'S HOUSE.

2 Kings 11 : 21—12 : 16.

PRINT vs. 7–15.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *I was glad when they said unto me,*
Let us go unto the house of Jehovah. — Ps. 122 : 1.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 122 : 1–9.
Reference Material: 2 Sam. 7 : 1–13; 1 Kings 6 : 1–14; 2 Chron. 24; Ps. 84; Luke 4 : 16.
Primary Topic: Taking Care of God's House.
Memory Verse: I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah. Ps. 122 : 1.
Junior Topic: How Joash Showed His Love for God's House.
Memory Verse: Ps. 122 : 1.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Our Church Should Mean to Us.
Topic for Young People and Adults: Why and How to Maintain Public Worship

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes. Pin up on one side of the class a picture of Solomon's temple and on the other side a picture of your own church. Ask questions regarding the temple and its repair of the pupils on the side where the picture of the temple stands, and on the other side ask questions applying the subject to your church and the care of it. Review by reversing the pictures and repeating the chief questions.

The Older Classes, as this is not a familiar lesson, will have a considerable number of facts to discuss. The teacher may appoint in advance one person to be ready to explain about the priests, another about the collection-box, a third about the money, a fourth about the workers, and a fifth about the utensils. After the historical part of the lesson is well understood, apply it to similar matters connected with your own church. One member of the class may be asked in advance to make a survey of the church property and see what repairs are needed. You should have present one of the church trustees or committee in charge of such things, to answer questions. You may decide to undertake as a class some of the repairs that are urgently needed.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher dates the temple repairs under Joash, B. C. 864.

Place. — The temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

General structure of Solomon's temple.
Building operations and tools in Joash's time.
Utensils used in the temple.
The best way to raise money for church use.
Arguments for beautiful churches.
Neglecting the church property and how to bring about a better condition.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: What Our Church Should Mean to Us.

I. A CHURCH NEGLECTED, 2 Kings, 11 : 21—12 : 6.
The influence of Jehoiada.
Joash's good intentions.
The priests' laxness.
Beautiful and well-kept churches.

II. A CHURCH RESTORED, vs. 7–16.
The popular subscription.
Wise oversight.
Faithful workers.
Our responsibility for our church.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Hathaway's *Living Questions.* Goss's *Hits and Misses.* Excellent treatment in Miller's *Devotional Hours* and Alexander Maclaren's *Expositions.* See also Butler's *Bible Work* and *The Pulpit Commentary.* On Joash see Rawlinson's *The Kings of Israel and Judah,* Edersheim's *History of Israel and Judah,* and Geikie's *Hours with the Bible.*

I. A CHURCH NEGLECTED, 2 Kings 11 : 21 — 12 : 6. We are now to study the further events of the reign of Joash, the dramatic beginning of which we studied last Sunday. We find his name spelled Jehoash, which is the longer form of the same name; thus also we have both Jehoram and Joram.

Joash had a long reign of forty years, the first part of which, while he had the guidance of the high priest Jehoiada, was well pleasing to Jehovah so far as the personal piety of the young king was concerned. His people, however, continued under the spell of idolatry. The heathen places of worship were not destroyed, and the misguided men of Judah kept on sacrificing and burning incense to gods of wood and stone.

This devotion to idolatry was accompanied, of course, by neglect of the worship of the true God and of his sanctuary. The splendid temple built by Solomon at so great cost of labor and wealth had been allowed to fall into decay. The temple was doubly dear to Joash, not only as the place where Jehovah manifested his presence, but also as his own refuge from deadly peril and his boyhood home. He therefore determined to rescue it from its disgraceful condition.

"Money might come to the temple in three different ways: (1) as the price of something vowed and redeemed for a price in ready money, Lev. 27 : 11–13; (2) as poll-tax payable for every male Israelite, Ex. 30 : 11–16; (3) as a free-will offering." — *Cambridge Bible.* Joash (Jehoash is the longer form) told the priests to take all the money from all three of these sources, on condition that they should themselves get the temple repaired.

This plan, however, did not work well. Perhaps the receipts of the temple from all sources were only enough for the support of the priests. The Chronicler lays the blame on the Levites, and says that they were inefficient in making the collections of offerings and dues for the temple (2 Chron. 24 : 5). The reign of Joash continued for twenty-three years, and still the temple was not repaired. Then the king bestirred himself again.

The Folly of Procrastination. "God would keep us active and diligent in all our work. It is a sin to neglect any duty. We grieve Christ when we loiter at our tasks. Promptness is half of obedience. Children should be taught early the duty of swiftness and alacrity in all their work. Loitering is sin. It takes out of life much of its power for good.

"'Lose this day loitering, 'twill be the same story
To-morrow, and the next more dilatory;
The indecision brings its own delays,
And days are lost lamenting o'er lost days.
Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute.
What you can do, or think you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.
Only engage, and then the mind grows heated;
Begin it, and the work will be completed.'"
—*J. R. Miller.*

Beautiful and Well-Kept Churches. In our churches "we are free to use the divine ministry of the beautiful, for it may become to us a precious means of grace. We may carve the wood, and cut the stone, and adorn the wall, and paint the glass, until, by the miracles of art, the dead seem to breathe and speak. We may have marble walls and ceilings of vermilion; nay, had we the wealth and power, our sanctuaries might be builded of rarest gems, with domes of gold and doors of transparent pearl — like the walls and gate of the City of God. For he must delight in the beautiful. Who can doubt? Think of the earth so rich, the sky so resplendent, the universe so infinitely glorious! Look at the heavens, where the golden constellations march, with equal step, their eternal round! Look at the oriel windows of the morning and evening, painted by the divine hand in sapphire, orange, and crimson! And how the walls he has built and sculptured in cliff and mountain-side, in lonely canyon or by the sounding sea, shame all our feeble hands have wrought!" —*Rev. Warren Hathaway, D.D.*

Our churches should be kept at least as well as the most beautiful home of the Christians of the community. They should be spotlessly clean, windows, floors, every hidden corner. Ragged carpets and pew cushions should not be allowed. The lights should be strong and restful to the eyes. The best architects and artists available should be consulted over every detail. Gaudy ornamentation, crude window coloring, and any display of wealth are sadly out of harmony with the spirit of Christ. Merely to enter an ancient village church in England is to receive as a benediction the spirit of worship.

II. A CHURCH RESTORED, vs. 7–16. 7. **Then king Jehoash** (that is, Joash), determined to take the direction of affairs into his own hands. The priests had had their chance to do the work and had not used it. **Called for Jehoiada the priest.** The high priest, head of all the temple affairs. Jehoiada was the king's uncle, who with his wife Jehosheba had rescued Joash from murder by his grandmother when a babe, as we learned last week. Jehoiada had brought about his coronation, and had doubtless served as regent till the young king was old enough to rule; but long before this Joash had taken into his own hands the full royal authority. **And for the other priests.** Doubtless they were more to blame than Jehoiada, who must have been very old by this time. Still, he was given charge of the work, under the king. **And said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?** They do not seem to have answered this question; they had no good answer to give, and shame kept them silent. **Now therefore take no more money from your acquaintance.** The priests "would now very naturally be unwilling to ap-

Joash Repairs the Temple.

7. Then king Jĕ-hō'-ăsh called for Jĕ-hoi'-ă-dà the priest, and for the *other* priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore take no *more* money from your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

8. And the priests consented that they should take no *more* money from the people, neither repair the breaches of the house.

9. But Jĕ-hoi'-ă-dà the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of Jehovah: and the priests that kept the threshold put therein all the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah.

10. And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the

---

propriate any part of the revenues which they had come to regard as their own, to the work of repair." — *Ellicott*. That is the danger of all perquisites in office, they are soon counted as part of the regular salary. **But deliver it for the breaches of the house.** The implication certainly is that the priests have been using for themselves what they should have used for the repair of the temple. But let us not find fault with them until we are quite sure that we are not using on our own selfish pleasures some part of our income that God wishes us to use for the progress of his work in the world.

8. **And the priests consented that they should take no more money from the people.** This consent was important, as it was the formal relinquishment of a prerogative which it seems the priests had enjoyed for some time, but the people had not agreed to it. Now that the priests had not done their share by repairing the temple, the penalty they paid was the loss of this revenue. **Neither repair the breaches of the house.** They lost not only the revenue but the chance to do the blessed and honorable work on the temple. That loss of noble work would count the most to a true man.

9. **But Jehoiada the priest took a chest.** The parallel account, 2 Chron. 24 : 8, says that Joash directed Jehoiada to do this. **And bored a hole in the lid of it.** "Holes in wood or stone were made by a drill, often worked with the aid of a drawn bow, through the string of which the drill was passed." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. We are standing now at the origin of our modern contribution-boxes, mite-boxes, and contribution-envelopes. Similar also are the collection-boxes in shops placed there by various charities, the Christmas collection-boxes of the Salvation Army, and the boxes for the poor kept sometimes at the doors of churches. We cannot make it too easy or convenient for people to give, or advertise the need for gifts too plainly. **And set it beside the altar** (the altar of burnt offerings in the court before the temple), indicating that the gifts were a kind of sacrifice. Later, that every one entering the temple might be reminded of the matter, the chest was placed at the entrance (2 Chron. 24 : 8). This chest became a permanent institution of the temple, and its equivalent was there in Christ's day (Mark 12 : 41). "The contribution-box should always be near the altar, so that when we come to pray we may also give. There should be no religious service without an opportunity for an offering to God." — *J. R. Miller*. **On the right side as one cometh into the house of Jehovah.** That is, on the north side of the altar, approaching the temple from the east. **And the priests that kept the threshold.** The doorkeepers, Levites. "In David's reign the Levites were divided into four classes: 1. Assistants to the priests in the work of the sanctuary; 2. Judges and scribes; 3. Gatekeepers; 4. Musicians." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary*. **Put therein all the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah.** The givers could then be sure that all their gifts were used for the purpose for which they intended them. Perfect openness in all parts of the process is necessary in raising money by gifts. Those receiving the money should make frequent public reports, and these should be well audited. Givers like to know what part of their gifts is used for administration (only a very small part in the case of missions), and how much goes directly to the cause.

10. **And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest.** 2 Chron. 24 : 9 tells us that a proclamation requiring gifts was made throughout the

chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags and counted the money that was found in the house of Jehovah.

11. And they gave the money that was weighed out into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah: and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, that wrought upon the house of Jehovah,

12. And to the masons and the hewers of stone, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the breaches of the house of Jehovah, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.

---

nation, and that the people with the nobles rejoiced and responded liberally. "The Chronicler plainly recognized that free-will offerings are more excellent than the donations which are painfully extracted by the yearly visits of official collectors. He would probably have sympathized with the abolition of pew-rents." — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.* **That the king's scribe and the high priest came up.** A leading secular officer and the chief religious officer (or his deputy). The king's scribe was his secretary, here acting as his representative.

Illustration. Those that use safety deposit vaults often see three men coming together to remove a single box and take some bond or other security from it. They are trustees, in charge of trust funds, and one is not allowed to visit the vault unless the others are present. Honest trustees and treasurers welcome such superintendence, and insist upon it. **And they put up in bags and counted the money that was found in the house of Jehovah.** Joash's secretary would record the amount each time, and report to his master. The money would first be counted (the order is reversed in the text), and then placed in bags, a certain sum to each bag, the mouth of the bag being then tied around with string.

Illustration. It is impossible to guard trust funds too carefully. "Only the other day a treasurer of a young people's society, scarcely more than a boy, was called upon to pay out the money which had been collected and placed in his hands, and it was discovered that it had been used by him in some affairs of his own and could not be replaced. The amount was not large in this case, and friends quickly made it good; but the young treasurer was guilty of embezzlement of funds which belonged to God." — *J. R. Miller.*

11. **And they gave the money that was weighed out.** "Throughout the whole period ending with the return from the Exile there can be no question of coined money. For every transaction of the least importance the balance had to be employed, and the tale of silver duly determined by weight. The weights employed were of stone and were kept in a bag." — *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.* Ingots of gold and silver of known weight were circulated, which might be passed from hand to hand without weighing if the transaction was a slight one. **Into the hands of them that did the work.** Not the workmen themselves, as the account goes on to say. **That had the oversight of the house of Jehovah.** They were the superintendents appointed by Jehoiada (2 Kings 11 : 18). **And they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, that wrought upon the house of Jehovah.** The money was paid out as it was needed or due. Wood was much used in ancient buildings, and there are many references to ancient carpenters, but their work (except in Egypt) has almost entirely disappeared.

12. **And to the masons and the hewers of stone.** "In the earlier centuries only high officials could afford stone houses. Frequently only the temple or shrines or tombs of a city were made of stone. As such buildings were very common, and much attention was paid to every detail of their construction, there was developed an efficient corps of masons. . . . A visitor to Jerusalem may still see the work of the ancient masons. The very shape of the masons' tools may be determined from the marks on the stones." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* **And for buying timber and hewn stone.** 2 Chron. 24 : 12 mentions also workers in iron and brass (bronze). **To repair the breaches of the house of Jehovah.** "Probably, when once the work was taken thoroughly in hand, it was found that repairs of all sorts were needed. The temple had stood for one hundred and thirty-six years, and up to this time it had, so far as we know, undergone no repairs at all." — *Rawlinson in The Pulpit Commentary.* **And for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.** The

13. But there were not made for the house of Jehovah cups of silver, snuffers, basins, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah;

14. For they gave that to them that did the work, and repaired therewith the house of Jehovah.

15. Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to give to them that did the work: for they dealt faithfully.

Hebrew verb indicates frequent action. Note the large powers given to the superintendents. Every overseer should have as wide scope as the nature of the work and his own capacity will allow. Many overseers make for confusion and inefficiency.

13. **But there were not made for the house of Jehovah cups of silver.** The gold and silver utensils of the temple had been used to buy off enemies. Thus Rehoboam purchased peace from Shishak (1 Kings 14 : 26); Asa made terms with Benhadad (1 Kings 15 : 18), and Joash himself (2 Kings 12 : 18) made a large gift of them to Hazael. There must have been great need of renewing the supply. **Snuffers.** Used for cutting off the burnt portions of the candles in the seven-branched candlestick which stood in the Holy Place of the temple. This must have needed doing as often as once every half-hour. **Basins.** These were used by the priests to receive the blood of the sacrificial victims. **Trumpets.** This form of trumpet was "nearly a yard long, a straight slender tube with a slight expansion at the mouth and a bell-shaped end. It was made of metal ('beaten silver,' Num. 10 : 2), and was used almost exclusively by the priests. A trumpet was sounded in the temple at the beginning and end of the Sabbath, giving notice to the people when they were to leave off work, and when they were to go to work again. The silver trumpets were blown at the beginning of each month, at the daily burnt-offering, and at the three pauses in the singing of the daily psalms." — *Condensed from Hastings's Bible Dictionary.* **Any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver.** These vessels were absolutely necessary for the use of the sanctuary, and had to be furnished, but not now. One thing at a time. **Of the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah.** 2 Chron. 24 : 14 tells us that after the repairs on the temple itself were completed, the needed utensils were supplied with what remained of the money. There is no conflict between the two accounts.

14. **For they gave that to them that did the work.** The carpenters, masons, and other workmen. **And repaired therewith the house of Jehovah.** That is, used the money for the repairs.

15. **Moreover they** (the king's secretary and the high priest) **reckoned not with the men.** Kept no formal accounts, stating what each overseer received of the temple offerings and what he paid out and for what purposes. **Into whose hand they delivered the money to give to them that did the work.** These were the overseers or superintendents before mentioned. "Society rests upon faith and trust. In all business transactions confidence must be reposed in some one, whose character is the guarantee of his honesty." — *Rawlinson.* If men are not trusted, they are not likely to be trustworthy. "'It is a shame to tell Arnold a lie; he always believes us,' said the Rugby boys about their great head-master. There is a time for using all precautions, and a time for using none. Business methods do not consist in spying at the heels of one's agents, but in picking the right men, and, having proved them, giving them a free hand. And is not that what the great Lord and Employer does with his servants, and is it not part of the reason why Jesus gets more out of us than any one else can do, that he trusts us more?" — *Alexander Maclaren.* **For they dealt faithfully.** "They were men of probity and honor who conscientiously looked after the men set under them, seeing that the work committed to their care was properly done. There is a sphere for faithfulness in the discharge of every kind of duty. Carlyle says of Louis XV, 'His wide France, look at it from the fixed stars, is no wider than thy narrow brick-field, where thou, too, didst faithfully or didst unfaithfully. It is not thy works, which are all mortal, infinitely little, and the greatest no greater than the least, but only the spirit thou workest in, that can have worth or continuance.'" — *Prof. John Orr, D.D.*

The Priests' Money (v. 16). The priests were not left without revenue. Theirs was the trespass money and the sin money. The first was the penalty paid,

at the priest's orders, for a wrong done one man by another. The wronged man received the money, if he were living; if he were dead, his next of kin; and if he left no kindred, then the money went to the priest. The sin money was the gift which those making an offering for sin were in the habit of making to the officiating priest. Note how careful Joash was that everything should be done justly in this whole transaction. That is the way to leave no sting behind.

Our Responsibility for Our Church. "'Faithful' work is prosperous work. As 2 Chron. 24 : 13 picturesquely says, 'Healing went up upon the work'; and the temple was restored to its old, fair proportions, and stood strong as before. Where there is conscientious effort God's blessing is not withheld. Labor 'in the Lord' can never be labor 'in vain,' though even a prophet may often be tempted, in a moment of weary despondency, to complain, 'I have labored in vain.' We may not see the results, nor have the workmen's joy of beholding the building rise, course by course, under our hands; but we shall see one day, though now we have to work in the dark." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Illustration. "Robert Ingersoll, addressing an audience of skeptics in the little village of Watkins, ventured the assertion that the course of the Christian religion was nearly run, and that it no longer possessed the vitality to propagate itself. His words were transported across the continent to Chaplain McCabe who telegraphed him: 'Go on with your scoffing. We are building a Methodist church every day in the year!'" — *Rev. Charles Frederic Goss, D.D.* The Christian church is the proof of the vitality of our religion; but only as it is adequately cared for.

Every Christian should feel himself responsible for his full share of care for the Lord's house. He can give money and time and thought and care. In many places, where the church is too poor for a janitor, the young people's society has regularly cleaned the sacred building, and kept up the fires. A little co-operative effort will keep the grounds around the church neat, and adorn them with flowers, shrubs, and trees. Organized division of the task will provide flowers for the pulpit throughout the year. Prompt repair of the hymn-books will prolong their life and add to the pleasure of singing. Sensible ventilation, not too violent for comfort, will greatly increase the effectiveness of sermons. Naked lights glaring into people's eyes cause somnolence and headaches; they should be shaded. The church roof should be kept in repair and the church exterior kept well painted, if it must be done by the volunteer efforts of the members. And a single Christian, who really feels the sacredness of God's house and cherishes a deep love for it, is enough to get all these things done. He (or she!) can be the Joash of his temple.

EASTER LESSON. — John 20 : 19–31.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The Lord is risen indeed.* — Luke 24 : 34.

Primary and Junior Topic: The First Easter.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why We Observe Easter Day.
Topic for Young People and Adults: The Effect of Belief in the Resurrection.

Time. The evening of the resurrection day, Sunday, April 9, A. D. 30. A week later, Sunday, April 16.

Place. Probably the upper room in Jerusalem where the disciples had observed the passover with their Lord.

Appearances of Jesus. These had been four: (1) to Mary Magdalene near the tomb on Easter morning; (2) to the other women returning from the tomb, near Jerusalem; (3) to Simon Peter alone, near Jerusalem; (4) to two unnamed disciples between Jerusalem and Emmaus and at Emmaus. These had all taken place on the first Easter Sunday.

The Fifth Appearance was in the evening of the same day, soon after the appearance at Emmaus. The disciples were at their evening meal, probably in the upper room which remained their meeting-place through the following days. There were ten, Judas being dead and Thomas absent, brooding and in despair.

The doors were shut, for fear that the Jews who had slain Jesus would not be satisfied, but would next attack his disciples. Through those shut doors the risen body of the Lord passed, and stood suddenly before them. They were sad beyond measure, and he came to them because they needed him, as he always comes to his followers in their troubles.

"As Jesus entered the upper room he greeted the assembled disciples with the usual Eastern salutation, 'Peace be unto you.' It had a special significance to the little band bereft of their Leader. He showed them the wounds in his hands and his side;

he wished to prove his bodily resurrection." — *Rev. G. Robinson Lees.* He even went so far, in order to prove his reality, as to eat a piece of a broiled fish (Luke 24 : 41–43).

Then the Saviour passed quickly to the spiritual meaning of his visit. As the Father had sent him into the world, and his work was accomplished, so he sent them into the world. Their work was only beginning, and they would need great wisdom for it, so that Christ, breathing on them, made the wonderful bestowal: "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." In the power of the Spirit they were even to have the authority to declare the forgiveness of sins, the authority that Christ himself had exercised through his ministry.

THE SIXTH APPEARANCE took place the following Sunday evening, and probably in the same room in Jerusalem. Thomas the Doubter had refused to believe the stupendous news of the risen Christ. It was too good to be true, he thought. He must himself touch Christ's wounds before he would believe.

Thomas the Doubter. Guercino.

Our Lord was tender to his imperfect faith, as he always is; but when he offered his torn hands and side to Thomas's doubting finger, the glad disciple did not apply the test. Instead he cried aloud, using words of greater reverence than Christ's disciples had yet used, "My Lord and my God!"

Christ accepted Thomas's confession, and with it had a word for all of us Christians who follow down through the ages. We are more blessed than Thomas, because we have faith to believe without seeing. It is indeed a noble thing to recognize when a great truth deserves believing, to perceive when Christ and Christianity are proved by the firm evidence of persons, events, and writings, and then to yield to this proved Christ and his religion the full devotion of our souls.

This is the meaning of Easter. Christ's resurrection is the best-proved event in all history. The evidence is before you and your mind cannot doubt it. What will you do with it? *These are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.*

LESSON IV (17). — April 23.

UZZIAH'S PRIDE AND PUNISHMENT. — 2 Chron. 26 : 1–21.

PRINT vs. 3–5, 15–21.

May Be Used with Temperance Applications.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Pride goeth before destruction,*
And a haughty spirit before a fall. — PROV. 16 : 18.

Devotional Reading: Prov. 16 : 18–25.
Reference Material: Num. 12 : 1–15; Deut. 8 : 11–14; 2 Kings 5 : 20–27; 2 Chron. 25; Jer. 9 : 23, 24; Dan. 4 : 28–33; Matt. 23 : 8–12; Jas. 4 : 6; Rev. 3 : 17–19.
Primary Topic: THE STORY OF A PROUD KING.
Memory Verse: When pride cometh, then cometh shame. Prov. 11 : 2.
Junior Topic: A MAN WHO FORGOT GOD.
Memory Verse: Prov. 16 : 18.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: "PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION."
Topic for Young People and Adults: THE PERILS OF PROSPERITY.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

In the Younger Classes the teacher may get the pupils to study by telling half of the class in advance that they will be expected to give the story of Uzziah, one taking it up where the other leaves off. The other half of the class are to be ready each of them with one lesson for our lives to be learned from the story of Uzziah.

In the Older Classes the teacher may assign in advance to different pupils the various applications of the lesson to modern life. One will be told to apply the story of Uzziah to modern rulers and public officials. Another will be told to apply it to rich men of to-day; a third to learned men of to-day; a fourth to men and women high in society. You may close with a five-minute essay read by a member: "What Would Be the Result if All Great Sins Showed Themselves as Leprosy?"

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The reign of Amaziah extended (Beecher) from B. C. 846 to 818. Uzziah (Beecher) reigned from B. C. 806 to 755, there being an interregnum of eleven years between Amaziah and Uzziah. Professor Mack, in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, dates Amaziah B. C. 804–787 and Uzziah B. C. 787–735. Hastings dates Amaziah B. C. 838–809, and Uzziah B. C. 809–757.

Place. — In the temple of Solomon, Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The geography of Uzziah's victories.
Agriculture in Palestine to-day.
Armor and weapons in Uzziah's times.
Arrangement of the temple.
Incense in the Bible.
Leprosy in the Bible.
Punishment of pride in the Bible.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: "Pride Goeth before Destruction."

I. The Follies of Two Kings, 2 Chron. 24 : 15—25 : 28.
   The tragic end of Joash.
   The great mistake of Amaziah.

II. Uzziah's Prosperity, vs. 1–15.
   The influence of Zechariah.
   Successful campaigns.
   A fortified capital.
   Wise husbandry.
   A mighty army.
   Widespread fame.

III. Uzziah's Pride and Punishment, vs. 16–21.
   A trespass in the temple.
   The king bravely rebuked.
   The swift penalty.
   The leper-king.
   The perils of prosperity.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

A fine chapter on "Double-Minded Men" in Parker's *People's Bible*. On God's providence see Alford's *Meditations*, Cox's *Biblical Expositions*, Moinet's *The 'Good Cheer' of Jesus Christ*, Guthrie's *Christ and the Inheritance of the Saints*, Taylor's *Limitations of Life*, Spurgeon's *Sermons, Vol. II.* Liddon's *Sermons*. Hasell's *Bible Partings*. Banks's *Great Portraits of the Bible*. Phelps's *Studies of the Old Testament*. Watkinson's *Lessons of Prosperity*.

I. THE FOLLIES OF TWO KINGS, 2 Chron. 24 : 15 — 25 : 28. The Folly of Joash. On the death of the good old high priest, Jehoiada, the mentor of king Joash from his youth, Joash fell away from his standards of thought and conduct. He was led astray by the nobles of Judah, who fawned upon him, and persuaded him to allow a return to the base idolatries that had such a hold upon the people. Jehoiada's son Zechariah was then high priest. Seized with prophetic fervor, he raised his voice in the midst of a throng in the court of the temple, and prophesied dire misfortune to come upon the nation as the result of this apostasy. Thereupon Joash ordered Zechariah executed in that very court, and not far from the altar of burnt offerings. This is probably the Zechariah to whom our Lord refers in Matt. 23 : 35. There is a tradition that for many years the blood of the martyr continued to bubble up through the pavement where he fell, and did not cease until the capture of Jerusalem fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy of ruin.

Zechariah's prophecy, however, began at once to be fulfilled, for King Hazael of Syria, having wrought much evil upon Israel to the north, next attacked Gath in Philistia. He was victorious, and turned swiftly upon Jerusalem. Joash met him, was badly beaten, and was forced to buy him off with the gold and silver and other treasures of his own palace and of Solomon's temple. King Asa had stripped them to buy off another Syrian king, Ben-hadad, but new stores had since accumulated. Now these were gone, and in his distress and humiliation King Joash fell ill in the castle of Millo, where some of his own attendants slew him on his bed, thus punishing the king for the killing of Zechariah. Joash had reigned for forty years.

The Folly of Amaziah. Joash was succeeded by his oldest son, Amaziah, a pious prince at first, who exercised what was for the times great kindness in executing his father's murderers and not putting their sons to death with them.

3. Sixteen years old was Ŭz-zī′-ăh when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jĕch-ĭ-lī′-ăh, of Jerusalem.

4. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Ăm-ă-zī′-ăh had done.

The first great deed of Amaziah was the war against Edom, a region south of the Dead Sea peopled by a fierce tribe, descended from Esau, who constantly harassed southern Judah. Carefully organizing an army of 300,000, Amaziah added 100,000 mercenaries whom he hired from the Northern Kingdom; but he let them go when a prophet protested against his getting aid from an idolatrous nation. When Amaziah objected on the ground of the cost of hiring these foreign soldiers, which would be wasted if he dismissed them, the prophet nobly answered, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." The saying was amply justified, for Edom was decisively conquered, and its many iniquities were terribly punished.

With this success, however, Amaziah's failure began. Puffed up with pride, he sought other conquests, and sent a bold challenge to King Joash of Israel, who was very prompt to accept it. Battle was joined at Bethshemesh, in Judah to the west of Jerusalem, and Amaziah was terribly beaten. Joash tore down two hundred yards of the wall of Jerusalem, and through that great gap entered the city. He took everything of value in the temple and palace, and carried away hostages as he returned in triumph to the Northern Kingdom.

Amaziah reigned for fifteen years after this defeat, but did nothing notable. He was foolish enough to worship the idols which he had taken from Edom, and received the deserved rebuke of a prophet, who shamed him for falling down before gods that had been utterly unable to save their own people. Finally an extensive conspiracy was formed against the despised king. Almost alone, he fled to Lachish in the south, where he was caught and killed. He had reigned for twenty-nine years and was fifty-four years old.

II. **UZZIAH'S PROSPERITY,** vs. 1–15. "Uzziah" means "Jehovah is my strength." He is called in Second Kings "Azariah," which means "Jehovah has helped." The two names are similar in sound in the Hebrew, as well as in meaning, and so were easily interchanged.

His Accession was brought about by a movement of "all the people" (v. 1). "This action was occasioned by the untimely death of his father Amaziah. Ordinarily the people are not mentioned as determining the royal succession." — *International Critical Commentary.*

Eloth (or Elath) was an important place at the head of the Gulf of Akabah, the northeastern extension of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez being the northwestern arm. Caravans from Arabia to Egypt or Philistia passed through Eloth. The place had belonged to King David, but his weaker successors lost it to the Edomites. The first recorded act of the young king Uzziah was to recapture this place, and rebuild it.

3. **Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign.** "Since Uzziah was only sixteen years old and Amaziah was fifty-four at his death, probably older brothers, and thus a first-born son, were set aside in favor of Uzziah." — *International Critical Commentary.* **And he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem.** "The reign of fifty-two years spoiled in an hour." — *Pulpit Commentary.* Uzziah's is one of the most important reigns in the history of Judah. With the exception of Manasseh's (fifty-five years) it is the longest, and it is almost twice as long as the longest reign of a king of Israel (Jehu, twenty-eight years). **And his mother's name was Jechiliah, of Jerusalem.** The name means "Jehovah is able." The care with which the mothers of the Hebrew kings are named is noteworthy. Usually they must have had more to do than the fathers with forming the characters of the young princes.

4. **And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah.** "As the reign of former kings, so the present was characterized by a combination of 'doing right in the eyes of Jehovah,' with a continuance of 'the high places,' and their sacrifices and worship." — *Edersheim.* **According to all that his father Amaziah had done.** His father had made two terrible mistakes. Uzziah should have been better than his father. "How can a son be better than his father? How can a son afford to rebuke his father by cultivating a superior virtue, by being strong where his father was

5. And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zĕch-ă-rī'-ăh, who had understanding in the vision of God: and as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper.

weak, by being wise where his father was foolish? But sons must do this, if the world is to go on. Sons must even venture to be larger, truer, wiser, stronger men than their fathers." — *Joseph Parker.*

5. **And he set himself to seek God.** Seeking God is not a matter of haphazard or of listlessness; we must set out on the quest with high determination; it is the greatest of all goals, and deserves the greatest of all zeal. **In the days of Zechariah.** This prophet is not mentioned elsewhere, and is not the author of the prophecy of Zechariah. Thirty-one Zechariahs are mentioned in the Old Testament. "He must have been a prophet of importance; he held a position of influence analogous to that of Jehoiada under Joash." — *New Century Bible.* Like Jehoiada, he seems to have maintained his influence over the king as long as he lived, and when he died Uzziah, like Joash before him, relapsed into evil ways. **Who had understanding in the vision of God.** We know nothing about this prophet except this, but this is enough. He may have been a humble man, the name of his father is not recorded, he was probably poor in this world's goods, but he was rich in visions of God, and they make the real wealth. If you are pure in heart and see God, if you have spiritual insight so that you understand what are the real values of life, your influence will go far and wide, as Zechariah's did. **And as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper.** "God's foreknowledge, God's superintending providence, enwraps us all round. It is like the space through which our globe revolves, like the air which we breathe as we move about on it." — *Dean Alford.* "He who orders one life must order *all* lives." — *Samuel Cox.* "The blessing which men of the Old Testament record from God was a negative one — that no plague should come near their dwelling. The blessing which we of the New Testament enjoy is a positive one — that if it does come, it shall be a minister of God for good." — *Rev. Charles Moinet.*

Illustration. "A son, who had left his father in the morning, returned at night to tell him that he had been most wonderfully preserved; for his horse had thrown him, and but for God's good guardian hand, he had certainly been killed. His father replied that he had met with a yet more remarkable providence and had still more reason to praise God. When the son's curiosity was wound up to the highest pitch, the father added, 'I have traveled the livelong day, preserved from all alarm or accident whatever.' Happy the man who thus sets the Lord always before him!" — *Thomas Guthrie.*

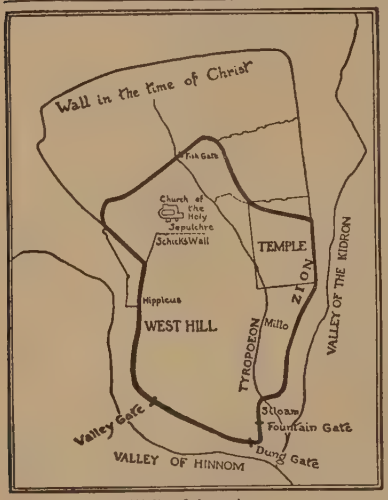
Uzziah's Campaigns. These were numerous, important, and successful. After his triumph on the south at Eloth, he turned westward against the Philistines, through so many reigns a thorn in the side of Judah. He captured their leading cities (Gath and Ashdod are mentioned particularly, with Jabneh, south of Joppa), and broke down their walls. Not content with subduing the country, he solidified his conquest by planting colonies there, and building cities in Philistia for his own people.

After this Uzziah conducted an expedition against the Arabians on the southeast, those of Gur-baal (an unknown place) and the Meunim, a tribe that seems to have dwelt near Mt. Seir. He was victorious here, and also compelled the great tribe of Ammonites on the east of the Jordan to pay tribute, restoring to Judah the rich pasture lands lying along the Jordan to the east. No wonder that Uzziah's fame spread as far as Egypt.

Uzziah's Fortifications. The wall of Jerusalem was in sad need of strengthening after the defeat that Amaziah suffered at the hands of Joash king of Israel. Uzziah therefore built towers at "the corner gate" (on the northwest), "the valley gate" (midway in the western wall where now is the Jaffa gate) and "at the turning of the wall" (perhaps the southern point of the valley of the Tyropœon, on the southeast of the city). In addition he built towers in the unsettled pasture-lands south and southeast of Jerusalem, which would be places of refuge for the shepherds and scattered inhabitants in case of sudden raid.

Uzziah's Peaceful Pursuits. The wild region south and southeast of Jerusalem, used mainly for pasture-land, greatly needed water. This Uzziah provided by cutting cisterns to store the water of the rainy season. It is recorded of this king that he "loved husbandry," a good thing to set down to the credit of any man. He

15. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skilful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.



Walls of Jerusalem.

The heavy line is probably nearly the wall Nehemiah repaired. The addition at the north is the line of the wall in the time of Christ. Jerusalem, with the present walls, is one of the few surviving walled cities of the world.

mentary. "These 'engines' were probably similar to the Roman *catapulta* and *balista*."—*Hastings's Bible Dictionary.* They were contrivances for hurling stones and darts, worked with tense cords like bows or with springs. **To be on the towers and upon the battlements,** from which the missiles could be hurled down on an approaching foe. "Uzziah was fond of everything that had life in it. He was the Theodore Roosevelt of his time." —*Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.* **For he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.** The reason given for all these successes of the king is brief but sufficient: "God helped him." That is the reason for every human success. "To say that God is too great to attend to the wants of individual men looks at first sight like reverence, but it is had many large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, which he pastured in the low country to the west of Judah, in the high uplands of Judah, and in the rolling downs east of the Jordan. His farmers and his vineyard-cultivators operated both on the high tablelands and in the low-lying fields.

UZZIAH'S ARMY. "Retaining or recalling David's institution of the *Gibborim*, or 'mighty men of valor,' he raised the number from the six hundred of David's time to two thousand six hundred, thus more than quadrupling this important body of picked troops." — *Rawlinson.* The regular army consisted of 307,500 troops, was carefully organized into regiments, and was well armed with shields and spears, helmets, habergeons (short coats of mail), bows, arrows, and slings.

15. **And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skilful men.** "Such engines of warfare are not mentioned elsewhere in the canonical Old Testament, but were probably used by the Assyrians in the days of Uzziah, and he may have introduced them as weapons of defence for Jerusalem." — *International Critical Com-*

From an old print.

Catapult for Casting Stones.

16. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

17. And Ăz-ă-rī'-ăh the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men:

18. And they withstood Ŭz-zī'-ăh the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Ŭz-zī'-ăh, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God.

---

reverence of that insincere and spurious kind which goes through the proprieties of etiquette in the palace of some falling dynasty while its heart is with the revolution outside that is already battering at the gates and clamoring for an abdication." — *Liddon.* To say that God is too great to help the least of his creatures is to make him less powerful than the least earthly ruler or even petty officer.

III. UZZIAH'S PRIDE AND PUNISHMENT, vs. 16–21. 16. **But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up.** The foolish man is puffed up with pride over his good fortune, but the wise man is made more humble by his. The wise man knows how little of all his good fortune is due to himself and how much to God. **So that he did corruptly.** "A man goes down by going up as often as not. Many a man who has been able to stand adversity and maintain his honor has become corrupt and immoral in the flush of success." — *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.* **And he trespassed against Jehovah his God.** "The Hebrew verb implies presumptuous dealing with holy things." — *Cambridge Bible.* **For he went into the temple of Jehovah.** It was a slight act in itself. Doubtless Uzziah did not realize its importance, and certainly he had no thought of its tremendous results. Any of our acts may prove momentous.

Priest, Censer and Altar of Incense.

Illustration. "The deviation of a railway point from its proper position by but the fractional part of an inch is a very little thing, but it determines whether there shall be an alarming collision or a safe journey. And, in looking back upon his history, every thoughtful man can see in it many situations in which a comparatively small thing has changed the whole complexion of his later life." — *William M. Taylor.*

To burn incense. The incense itself was regarded as exceedingly holy, as well as the altar on which it was burned. "The holiest service of the temple was when the incense was offered on the golden altar within the Holy Place. It symbolized the offering of Israel's worship by the great high priest." — *Edersheim.* **Upon the altar of incense.** This beautifully formed and elaborately adorned altar stood in the Holy Place, in front of the veil that hid the Most Holy Place. Behind the veil was the ark and above the ark the sacred light which betokened the Infinite Presence. The incense, burned daily by the high priest before the veil, was in worship of this invisible Presence.

17. **And Azariah the priest went in after him.** He was high priest, as is said in verse 20, and was probably the Azariah named in 1 Chron. 6 : 36. **His name was** the same as the king's in its alternative form. **And with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men.** They doubtless belonged to the "course" of priests then on duty in the temple. They needed to be valiant men to oppose a powerful king in what he had set his heart upon.

18. **And they . . . said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn**

19. Then Ŭz-zī'-ăh was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense.

20. And Ăz-ă-rī'-ăh the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him.

21. And Ŭz-zī'-ăh the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

---

incense unto Jehovah. The law for the burning of incense is given in Ex. 30 : 1–10. **But to the priests the sons of Aaron.** "The act was a flagrant assumption, not only of the priestly, but of the high-priestly office, and, if tamely submitted to, would have practically subordinated the entire priesthood to the monarch, and have gone far to destroy the whole Mosaic system, so carefully handed down hitherto from generation to generation." — *Rawlinson.* The story of Korah and his fellow conspirators, told in Num. 16, should have warned Uzziah of the terrible punishment liable to follow the offering of incense unlawfully. **Go out of the sanctuary.** They were indeed brave men to order a mighty monarch in this way. There is nothing like the knowledge that he is right to make a man brave. **Neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God.** "A euphemism, a threat of danger and disgrace." — *Cambridge Bible.*

19. **Then Uzziah was wroth.** If soldiers had been there, he would doubtless have had every priest killed on the spot. **And he had a censer in his hand to burn incense.** His terrible fall came, we must remember, in the temple, surrounded by all the symbols of religion. But religious forms will never save a man while his heart is not in them. **And while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead.** Thus suddenly did leprosy come upon Miriam for her disobedience (Num. 12 : 1–10) and upon Gehazi for his lying (2 Kings 5 : 27). **Before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense.** These particulars are repeated to emphasize the shame and defilement.

20. **Behold, he was leprous in his forehead.** The disease shows itself first in white spots. "Leprosy is a chronic, hereditary, malignant vampire, slowly eating up its victim in one long meal. It eats hair, nails, flesh, bones, exposing heart and lungs through gnawed and ghastly ribs. Jesus had compassion, put his hand on the leper in defiance of all sanitary and civil law, and with a word changed that festering mass of corruption into the sweetness of the flesh of a little child. Leprosy is God's language to describe sin: hereditary, eating like a canker, horrible, to be quarantined against here and hereafter, unmedicable by man, instantly curable by power Divine." — *Bishop H. W. Warren.* **And they thrust him out quickly from thence.** "They must have felt strong compassion for their unhappy king, but the presence of a leper would have defiled the holy place." — *E. J. Hasell.* **Yea, himself hasted also to go out.** "The leprosy was but the outward token of the invisible sin of pride; yet how little shame the reality of sin occasions, as compared with that caused by an outward symbol of it like this! We may believe that in the end inward character will somehow stamp itself upon the outward appearance, and then men will see sin in its real loathsomeness." — *Butler's Bible Work.* **Because Jehovah had smitten him.** "God does not always punish sin in the same way. That irreverent worshipers are not all lepers is no proof that they are more pleasing to God now than when the Judæan king was rebuked by the loathsome disease." — *Austin Phelps.* Professor Phelps named among the modern forms of presumption in worship (1) sleeping in God's house; (2) heedlessness in God's house; (3) frequenting God's house as a place of entertainment merely; (4) hiding our sins from ourselves under cover of outward devotion; (5) offering worship which ignores or denies essential truths regarding God.

21. **And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death.** The disease was incurable in that day, and even now is seldom cured. **And dwelt in a separate house,**

being a leper. See the law of lepers, Lev. 13 : 45, 46. He was cut off from all intercourse with his fellow men, and of course he was not allowed to enter the temple. In the most terrible of all ways his pride had a fall. His punishment followed him even into the grave. For, although he was " buried with his fathers, it was ' in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings,' probably the burying ground of the members of the royal family; he was not laid in the sepulchre where the kings of Judah rested; 'for they said, He is a leper.' " — *Edersheim.* **For he was cut off from the house of Jehovah.** " We are not told whether during his incarceration he repented of the sin that he had committed; but we may perhaps assume that he did so, since he certainly left behind him the character of a good, rather than a wicked, king." — *Rawlinson.*

Illustration. William Herschel, when a young man, deserted from the Hanover army when it was part of the English forces, and ran away to England. There, after arduous studies, he became a great astronomer, and discovered a new planet, Uranus. The English king sent for him to do him honor, but before he said a word to him he placed in Herschel's hand a paper which proved to be a pardon for his desertion. Thus each one of us may approach God, only after, through Christ, we have obtained pardon for our many sins against him.

And Jotham his son was over the king's house. Since Uzziah could not exercise the functions of a king, his son was made regent, probably during the last eleven years of his father's life.

The Leprosy of Intemperance. Drunkenness is like leprosy in its defilement. The drunkard soon gets down into the gutter. His speech becomes foul, and his heart becomes corrupt. The social evil is closely allied with the saloon.

Drunkenness is like leprosy in its insidious beginnings. Only a glass of light wine or beer — what's the harm? But before the drinker knows it, he is the victim of a habit that cannot be shaken off. The first glass is like the first tiny white spot that marks the beginning of leprosy.

Drunkenness is like leprosy in its isolation. The drunkard soon drives away his friends. He soon exiles himself from his work. He shuts himself up with his sin.

Drunkenness is like leprosy in its maiming. As the fingers and toes and other members of the leper drop off one by one, so the drunkard loses his skill, his memory, his keen vision, all his excellencies and powers.

And finally, both drunkenness and leprosy end inevitably in death; but leprosy does not kill the soul, while drunkenness destroys both soul and body. What greater work for Christians than to drive strong drink off from the earth?

" Pride Goeth before Destruction." The application of this event " to ourselves is clearly this, that no imagined or real good qualities of our own must embolden us to approach God in any other way than that in which the vilest and unworthiest of our fellow-men are privileged to draw near to him, if they will — namely, through the intercession of the ' High Priest over the house of God,' Christ Jesus." — *E. J. Hasell.* Pride and irreverence are likely to attend prosperity, but they need not. When we are prosperous, let us have the spirit of Isaiah. " In the year that king Uzziah died " (Isa. 6 : 1) Isaiah had in this same temple a vision of God to which he responded with a deep sorrow for sin, a sad sense of his uncleanness. Because of this the Lord cleansed him and made him the great herald of the Messiah.

" The haughty eye shall seek in vain
What innocence beholds;
No cunning finds the key of heaven,
No strength its gate unfolds.

" Alone to guilelessness and love
That gate shall open fall;
The mind of pride is nothingness,
The childlike heart is all."
— *John G. Whittier.*

The Perils of Prosperity. " One of Emerson's ancestors was in the habit of praying that none of his posterity might be rich. It is easy to imagine a man offering a prayer like that for his posterity, although it would be rather a shabby thing to do, but you will hardly find a sane man offering such a prayer for himself. Prosperity is a blessing as it widens the range of our physical enjoyments, renders possible a fuller intellectual life, gives opportunity for the expression of highest character, and enables us to act out more fully our noblest aspirations. A true religion will prove itself by its power to produce general wealth." — *Rev. W. L. Watkinson, D.D.*

On the other hand, as Dr. Watkinson goes on to show, prosperity has ruined many men and nations. It leads them to forget God. It fosters pride, gives opportunity to commit many sins, lowers ideals, and fixes the aim upon the earth. It was thus with Uzziah, but it need not have been.

LESSON V (18). — April 30.

ISAIAH'S SUMMONS AND RESPONSE. — Isa. 6 : 1–13.

PRINT vs. 1–8.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Here am I; send me.* — Isa. 6 : 8.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 67 : 1–7.
Reference Material: Gen. 12 : 1–4; Ex. 3 : 1 — 4 : 17; Josh. 1 : 1–9; Jer. 1 : 4–10; Ezek. 2 : 1–7; Matt. 10 : 5–20; 28 : 18, 19.
Primary Topic: God Calls Isaiah to Help Him.
Memory Verse: Here am I; send me. Isa. 6 : 8.
Junior Topic: A Young Man Who Was Ready.
Memory Verse: Isa. 6 : 8.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: Our Response to the Call for Service.
Topic for Young People and Adults: The Service to Which God Calls Us.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may be asked at the outset to recall times when they were sent on errands. What did they say and do? Our lesson is about a young man who was sent on an errand by God himself. Show a picture of Solomon's temple, pointing out where Isaiah may have stood when his vision came to him. What is a vision? Have any of your pupils ever dreamed? But this was more than a dream. Get a pupil to tell the vision as far as he can, and when he halts have another pupil take up the story. The lesson to be clinched is ready obedience — to parents, teachers, God.

The Older Classes have here a fine missionary lesson and also a lesson in social service. Appoint beforehand half the class to name and describe each of them one line of important service to which God calls modern Christians. Ask each person in the other half of the class to name a common excuse for not responding to the call for service, and the answer to that excuse. The teacher will be ready with other calls and excuses that are not named by the class.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The death of King Uzziah is assigned by Professor Beecher to B. C. 755.

Place. — The temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Compare the call of Isaiah with those of Jeremiah (Jer. 1) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1, 2).
Seraphim and angels.
The Bible conception of the holiness of God.
Bible visions of God.
Old Testament teachings regarding sin.
Old Testament teachings concerning forgiveness.
Missionary bearings of this event.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Service to Which God Calls Us.

I. Isaiah and His Writings. vs. 1.
   A noble character.
   A noble book.

II. Isaiah's Vision of God, vs. 1–5.
   God's majesty.
   God's holiness.
   Man's sinfulness.

III. Isaiah's Response to God's Call, vs. 6–13.
   A messenger needed.
   The messenger ready.
   Our call: what is our answer?

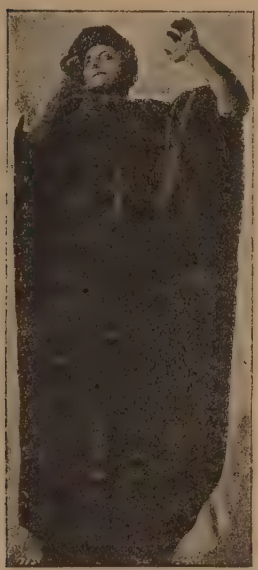
THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Isaiah, especially Maclaren's *Expositions*, Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible*, Driver's *Isaiah, His Life and Times*, *Cambridge Bible* (Skinner), *New Century Bible* (Whitehouse), *Expositor's Bible* (George Adam Smith), *International Critical Commentary* (Gray), etc. Jordan's *Prophetic Ideas and Ideals*. Albertson's *College Sermons* and *The Prophets and the War*. Gunsaulus's *Paths to the City of God*. Coyle's *The Church and the Times*. Westcott's *Peterborough Sermons*. Trench's *Sermons New and Old*. Elmslie's *Memoirs and Sermons*. Hunter's *De Profundis Clamavi*. Aitken's *The Love of the Father*. Newton's *An Ambassador*. Charles R. Brown's *The Quest of Life*. Morrison's *The Wind on the Heath* and *The Weaving of Glory*. George A. Gordon's *Revelation and the Ideal*. Hugh Price Hughes's *Essential Christianity*. Poems by Luther and Alexandre Guiraud.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Pictures of Isaiah by Ciuffagni (Florence), Michelangelo (Sistine Chapel, Rome), Bartolommeo (Florence), Holbein (*Icones*), Burne-Jones, Sargent (frieze in the Boston Public Library).

I. ISAIAH AND HIS WRITINGS. Isaiah's Name means "salvation of Jehovah," or "Jehovah saves." His name was the key-note of his message to the world, and he so regarded it (Isa. 8 : 18).



Isaiah.
From Sargent's Frieze of the Prophets in the Boston Public Library.

Isaiah's Father was named Amoz, a name entirely different in the Hebrew from that of the prophet Amos. Of Amoz nothing further is known.

Isaiah's Station in Life is unknown, but "from the fact that Isaiah was intimately acquainted with the ways of the court and had at all times ready access to the presence of the king, as well as from a certain aristocratic loftiness of thought which appears in his writings, we may probably conclude that he belonged to a good family and had enjoyed all the advantages of education and social intercourse that were open to the son of a prominent citizen of Jerusalem." — *Professor Skinner.*

Isaiah's Career as a statesman-prophet occupied about four decades. Beginning with the death of King Uzziah of Judah, it filled the reigns of his successors, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His life was more closely interwoven with the history of his times than was that of any other prophet. His great political teaching was that Judah should rely on Jehovah and should not make alliance with Assyria. That vast kingdom was threatening from the east, and at a time when both Syria and Israel were attacking Judah from the north, an alliance with the Assyrian king seemed the easiest way to provide safety. It was, however, only a temporary safety that brought Judah under the Assyrian domination. Later, when Judah was tributary to Assyria, Isaiah urged vehemently that the nation's safety consisted in neutrality in the quarrels of Assyria with other nations. Particularly, the prophet opposed that alliance with Egypt which was an act of rebellion against Assyria, and brought upon the nation the great invasion of Assyrians and the siege of Jerusalem. During all these troubled years Isaiah was the great political figure in Judah, and when his advice was followed the issue was always a happy one; never, when it was disregarded.

Isaiah's Teachings. 1. *About God.* The prophet believed with all his heart in one sole Deity, the Infinite Lord of all things, supreme, majestic, glorious, holy. He believed in a divine purpose for the world which Jehovah, with calm and irresistible force, was working out. 2. *About the Hebrew nation.* Isaiah believed firmly that this great God was the God of his nation, and that his nation was made up of Jehovah's people. Isaiah felt himself to be commissioned by God to declare God's royal will to his people. The tragedy of Isaiah's life was his consciousness that his own nation, God's people, was rejecting God and rushing headlong to ruin. 3. *About the Messiah.* Isaiah was, however, the prophet of salvation. He believed in a coming King of the house of David, who should save his people from their sins, and bring in a reign of happiness, purity, and peace. These prophecies are the crown of Isaiah's work, and constitute a picture of Christ which is marvelous in its completeness, accuracy, beauty, and power. They are the summit of the Old Testament.

Isaiah's Style. "Isaiah's poetical genius is superb." — *Driver.* "Every word from him kindles, stirs, and strikes its mark." — *Dillmann.* "The consummation of art in artlessness is fully attained by Isaiah." — *Whitehouse.* Isaiah's imagination was more powerful than that of any other Old Testament writer. He is a master of vivid description, of magnificent metaphors, especially those of flood, storm, and sound. He made fine use of the music of words, such as alliteration. His sentences flow rhythmically, with a majestic melody. He is tense with indig-

1. In the year that king Ŭz-zī'-ăh died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

nation at the oppressors of the poor, and his invective is like the clash of steel on steel.

Was There a Second Isaiah? Many modern critics assign the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, with several sections of the first portion of the book, to an unknown prophet who lived and wrote during and after the exile. These critics argue from a difference in language and style, from allusions that seem to fit a later date, and especially from the mention of Cyrus by name in the latter portion of the book. Believers in a single Isaiah point to the many resemblances in style between the two parts, assert that most great writers change their style during a long life, declare that the prophets write from the viewpoint of ages later than their own, that predictive prophecy and divine inspiration could reveal the name of Cyrus, and that it is inconceivable that a prophet of the commanding genius of the author of the last half of Isaiah could have lived and remained unknown.

II. ISAIAH'S VISION OF GOD, vs. 1–5. Isa. 6 : 1—9 : 7 is a collection of Isaiah's writings which Professor Whitehouse calls "The Book of Immanuel." Beginning in gloom, it ends in sunshine. It introduces the great figure of the Messiah, Immanuel, "God with us," and closes with one of the most magnificent prophecies of Christ. "This chapter 6 is one of the most important in the history of revelation. Like a picture of wonderful beauty and subtle suggestion, it will repay repeated and careful study. The great words of the chapter are heard and spoken in vision, but they cannot be called visionary in any shallow sense; they are intensely practical, they contain the prophet's call, they give the keynote of his life, and sum up in a few striking sentences the spirit and purpose of his ministry." — *Hastings.*

1. **In the year that king Uzziah died.** This was about B. C. 755 (Beecher). The Hebrews at this time dated events from important happenings, like this; later, from the accession of the reigning king.

Illustration. "I took up the death-roll at a workhouse: Elizabeth So-and-so, died so-and-so. Then I took up a volume of English history, Queen Elizabeth, died so-and-so. I find that the one word described the end of both pauper and king — 'the beggar *died*,' 'William the Conqueror *died*,' 'King Uzziah *died*.' How the one word suffices for all sorts and conditions of men!" — *Rev. J. H. Jowett, D.D.*

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. Isaiah, in his vision, was standing in the court of the temple, looking toward the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. This is the only vision recorded in Isaiah, and it is so full of detail, so solemn and impressive, and fraught with so great consequences in Isaiah's life, that we must think of it as a real vision and not a literary artifice. **High and lifted up.** The prophet in his vision saw no roof of the temple, but a glorious throne based upon the temple area and towering in splendor to the skies. Isaiah may have just come from the royal chamber in which the dead king Uzziah lay in state. His mind full of the tragic close of a mighty reign, ending in the horrible uncleanness of leprosy, Isaiah sees this vision of the King of kings, infinite in holiness, resplendent in purity, high and lifted up above all the Uzziahs and Jothams of earth. **And his train filled the temple.** The spreading robe of the Almighty filled all the building. Solomon's temple is of course meant.

"No face: only the sight
Of a sweeping garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognize." — *Browning's "Christmas Eve."*

Illustration. The men who accomplish great things for the world are the men who like Isaiah have great visions of God. "Saul of Tarsus, on the Damascus road, saw Jesus Christ, and out of that vision came a power of manhood that has thrown itself beneficently across twenty centuries. Luther, in his monk's cell, had a vision of the spiritual, and out of it came the Protestant Reformation, with all its forces of liberty and progress and enterprise. General Booth's tremendous success with the Salvation Army, an organization which in less than a generation has belted the globe, is simply the realization of what he saw. Because David Livingstone had eyes to see, Africa to-day is zoned with light." — *Rev. Robert F. Coyle, D.D.*

Two men looked through prison bars,
The one saw mud — the other stars.

2. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

2. **Above him stood the seraphim.** The seraphim are supernatural attendants upon Jehovah, but their form and nature are unknown. The word means "burning," "glowing," either from the light their bodies radiate or from their flaming eyes. This is the only mention of seraphim in the Bible. **Each one had six wings.** "The general idea of the six wings was probably rapid flight, the carrying out of God's behests 'with speed swiftly.' But in the divine presence the wings were applied to a different use." — *Rawlinson.* **With twain he covered his face.** Milton nobly pictures such a scene:

> "Fountain of light, thyself invisible
> Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st,
> Throned inaccessible, but when thou shadest
> The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud
> Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine
> Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
> Yet dazzle Heaven, that brightest Seraphim
> Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."
> — *Paradise Lost, III. 375.*

"God has not made us only to interrogate; God has made us also to adore." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

Illustration. Reverence is the first essential of worship. "A friend of mine, a clergyman, was showing some one over his church. This person omitted to take his hat off on entering the church. 'I hope you don't mind my keeping my hat on?' he said to my friend. '*I* mind? Not at all!' was my friend's reply. 'It isn't *my* house!'" — *W. J. Foxell.*

And with twain he covered his feet. "He covered his feet in order, I suppose, that his very form and motion might not be seen. In like manner, it was commanded of the high priest that his garments should 'go down to his feet,' that the minister should not be seen." — *Dean Vaughan.* We are to forget ourselves in our service. **And with twain he did fly.** "The third pair of wings suggest *service.*" — *Hastings.* The seraphim thus united humble reverence and active service. "Mary, sitting at Christ's feet, and Martha, busy in providing for his comfort, may be, to a large extent, united in us here, and will be perfectly so hereafter." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

3. **And one cried unto another.** They "kept crying" throughout the vision, like the four living creatures of Rev. 4 : 8, each with six wings, who "have no rest day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God." **And said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts.** "Holy" means perfectly righteous, the pure character of Deity contrasted with the sinfulness of men. The word is repeated thrice for solemn emphasis, and the ancient church found here a hint of the great Christian doctrine of the Trinity. **The whole earth is full of his glory.** Holiness is God's inward character, "glory" is the shining and splendid outward expression of that character in the beauties and grandeur of nature and the best work of God's chief creation, man. John's commentary on this passage is that it was Christ's glory that Isaiah saw when he beheld this vision (John 12 : 41), and we must remember that all of this wonderful picture of Jehovah is an equally faithful portrait of the Son.

> "Earth's crammed with Heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God;
> But only he that sees takes off his shoes.
> The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."
> — *Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

Illustration. "One day in London I was sitting in a dark omnibus. A man came in to examine our tickets, and I thought to myself, you will never be able to see whether they have been punctured aright. As I watched, curious to notice, he touched a little spring on his breast, and in a tiny globe of glass a beautiful glow of electric light shone out. Manifestly the man could see anywhere, because he carried the light with which he saw. So when the heart is full of God, you will find God everywhere." — *F. B. Meyer.*

4. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

---

4. **And the foundations of the thresholds.** The bases on which the gates of the temple rested. **Shook at the voice of him that cried.** "Him" is singular, but refers to all: "of each one that cried." The cry must have been a mighty, reverberant shout. **And the house was filled with smoke.** The smoke which filled the temple was an indication of God's wrath, aroused by human sinfulness, a sinfulness of which Isaiah, in the next verse, shows himself sadly conscious. We see in Ps. 18 : 8; 74 : 1; 80 : 5; Rev. 15 : 8 that smoke was regarded as a symbol of God's anger.

5. **Then said I, Woe is me!** Isaiah's vision of God is now followed by a vision of himself. **For I am undone.** The vision of God, that would have been a high honor if Isaiah had been worthy of it, was felt by him in his consciousness of sin to be a stern condemnation. Thus Paul's preaching was to some "a savor unto death" and to others "a savor unto life" (2 Cor. 2 : 16). **Because I am a man of unclean lips.** One can most easily sin in speech (see Jas. 3 : 2), and sinful speech means a sinful heart (see Matt. 12 : 34). Who of us would not stand ashamed before such a vision of the pure God, and like Peter say (Luke 5 : 8), "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? Stalker thinks that Isaiah had formed the habit of profanity. Hastings thinks that as instinctively the young man formed his lips to join the chorus of the seraphim, he paused in horror at the thought of what his lips had been wont to utter. **And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.** Even at this beginning of his ministry, Isaiah thought in large terms, not merely of himself but of his people. Had he been profane? So were they. Their uncleanness befouled him, and he shared the responsibility for their sins. **For mine eyes have seen the king, Jehovah of hosts.** It was the belief of the Hebrews that no one could see God and live; see Ex. 33 : 20; Judges 13 : 22, 23, etc. Least of all could a being so sinful as Isaiah felt himself to be expect to live after a vision of the holy God.

God's Holiness and Our Sinfulness. "Like some search-light flung from a ship over the darkling waters, revealing the dark doings of the enemy away out yonder in the night, the thought of God and his holiness streaming in upon a man's soul, if it does so in any adequate measure, is sure to disclose the heaving waters and the skulking foes that are busy in the dark." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

It was well for Isaiah's work that he saw his own sinfulness before pointing out the sins of his people. "There is great hope for any reform which begins in the heart of the prospective reformer." — *Rev. Charles C. Albertson, D.D.* Having preached to himself, he could preach to others.

Illustration. "Christmas Evans tells us in his diary that one Sunday afternoon he was traveling a very lonely road to attend an appointment, and he was convicted of a cold heart. He says, 'I tethered my horse and went to a sequestered spot, where I walked to and fro in an agony as I reviewed my life. I waited three hours before God, broken with sorrow, until there broke over me a sweet sense of his forgiving love. I received from God a new baptism of the Holy Ghost. As the sun was westering, I went back to the road, found my horse, mounted it and went to my appointment. On the following day I preached with such new power to a vast concourse of people gathered on the hillside, that a revival broke out that day and spread through all Wales." — *Hastings.*

"Isaiah was a noble and virtuous youth, innocent, pure, high-minded, serious, and yet he needed a full consecration: but having received that he was qualified for the loftiest service." — *Hugh Price Hughes.*

"If our visions make us vain, they are false fire that lures us unto the bottomless bog!" — *Rev. Joseph Fort Newton, Litt.D.*

"Better surely that we should fall prone in the dust now, crying out in our anguish, 'Woe is me! for I am undone,' than that we should find ourselves seeking refuge at last behind the rock and the mountains, pleading with nature, in the death-

6. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7. And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven.

8. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.

---

throes of her disolution, to hide from us that which it now might be life to see — God's glory and our shame." — *Rev. W. Hay M. H. Aitken.*

III. ISAIAH'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S CALL, vs. 6–13. 6. **Then flew one of the seraphim unto me.** "The seraph was not told to go, but he knew just what to do. The fact is, the seraphim have gone so often for the live coal that whenever they hear a sinner crying that he is undone, they go for it." — *F. B. Meyer.* **Having a live coal in his hand.** What is meant is a hot stone, such as those on which cakes were baked or meat roasted in an Oriental household. To boil milk, one of these stones was plunged into it. **Which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.** A simple domestic process was thus linked with the temple ceremony of purification by sacrifice, but the meaning of both was the same.

7. **And he touched my mouth with it.** This was a divine intimation of the mighty things that Isaiah was to do with his power of speech. **And said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips.** Isaiah's lips could not be laid on the altar and so sacrificed to God, but in the hot stone the altar was brought to his lips, which thus were sacrificed. **And thine iniquity is taken away.** "Observe the manner in which sin, that is, the *guilt* of sin, is here, as evermore in Holy Scripture, spoken of as taken away by a free act of God, an act of his in which man is passive." — *Trench.* The strongest and wisest men are helpless here. **And thy sin forgiven.** The assurance is repeated, that the anxious soul may have no doubt in the matter.

8. **And I heard the voice of the Lord.** Not until he was purified so that he could speak the Lord's words did Isaiah hear the voice of the Lord. **Saying, Whom shall I send.** Send — on what errand? To minister to human need. "There is a cry which comes swelling up from sickbeds, from hospitals, from men in doubt, from men in trouble, from men struggling with deadly temptations, from lads adrift, from children left upon the world, from girls driven by poverty to the streets, from heathen lands, from Africa, from India, from China — 'Whom wilt thou send? and who will come to us?'" — *Hastings.* **And who will go for us?** Some see in the use of the plural "us" an indication of the triune nature of Deity; others think that Jehovah here included the seraphim or the angelic hosts with himself. **Then I said, Here am I; send me.** This is a wonderful example of the result of the forgiveness of sin: it leads to readiness and even eagerness for service. The grateful heart cannot do too much for its Redeemer. Only an instant before, Isaiah was down in the depths of sorrowful pollution and weakness; now he is alert, strong, willing for the very hardest tasks. This is the transformation of conversion, and all our pupils may experience it.

THE MESSAGE. "But when the terms of the divine command were announced, Isaiah's heart must again have sunk within him!" — *Whitehouse.* It was indeed an ominous message which the prophet was to deliver to his people:

> "Go on hearing, yet understand not;
> Go on seeing, yet perceive not.
> Make the heart of this people fat,
> Make dull their ears and besmear their eyes
> Lest they see with their eyes,
> And hear with their ears,
> And understand with their heart,
> And turn again, and be healed."

It was a message of despair, and meant that the people of Judah were so far gone in sin that they would not be converted. It does not, of course, mean that God does not *want* his people to turn again to him; but that the Father is hoping against hope, and that, in spite of all he can do, the nation will disappoint him at last. This message is not of purpose but of prophecy.

The Duration of the Warning. The young prophet was eager to know how long he was to engage in this fruitless ministry. What was to be the end of his barren preaching? It was to end, God told him, only when the nation as it existed then should be wholly destroyed, when its cities should be left without inhabitants, its land left waste, its people carried into exile. The destruction was to be as complete as of an oak-tree burned in the fire. Not until then could Isaiah cease his work, and then there would be no one left to preach to.

But many commentators see in the closing words of Jehovah a message of hope and comfort for Isaiah: "Judah shall indeed be cut down like an oak, but the roots and the stump will remain. There will be a remnant of holiness, on which God may again build up a great people." This is Isaiah's characteristic doctrine of the Remnant, and there is reason to find it here in the vision that opened and inspired his ministry. It is the great hope that animates all God's clear-eyed prophets: they see the evil in the world, they know what its fatal results will be, but they have an unconquerable belief that God's will will yet be done in his world.

Our Call: What Is Our Answer? "The work of the Hebrew prophet was not infrequently inaugurated by a consecration-vision — a theophany in which the prophet is summoned to his life-work. Moses (Ex. 3), Samuel (1 Sam. 3), and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1, 2) were each called to his prophetic function by a remarkable and vivid manifestation of God's presence. But to other prophets God fulfills himself in other and more normal ways. And it is through these normal ways 'the word of the Lord came' unto Hosea (through the domestic tragedy of his life), Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. It is one of the most mischievous delusions of religious life to unduly exalt the abnormal." — *Rev. Owen C. Whitehouse, D.D.*

Illustration. Compare Wendell Phillips's sudden call to the championship of the slave in the meeting in Faneuil Hall, Boston, with the gradual and steady adoption of that cause by Charles Sumner, of whom Whittier wrote,

> "No trumpet sounded in his ear,
> He saw not Sinai's cloud and flame;
> But never yet to Hebrew seer
> A clearer voice of duty came."

It is said that many, when they hear God's call for service, answer, "Here am I; send *him!*" Certainly this is the spirit back of our shifting excuses: "I am too busy," "I am not fit," "Others are more gifted," "I can serve God just as well where I am," "I'll consider it some other time."

Illustration. George Bowen, classical scholar of distinction and a fine musician, was a skeptic and a pessimist. A great experience came to him and taught him the truth of immortality. Later he came to write: "If there is One above all who notices the desires of men, I wish he would take note of the fact that, if it please him to make known his will concerning me, I should think it the highest privilege to do that will wherever it might be and whatever it might involve." This decision soon led him to give up his wealth and his cultured society, and go to India where for forty years he lived in crowded Bombay, in a poor hut, and devoted himself to the wretched people of that land. At last he laid down his life for them.

Some Christians, like Isaiah, know just the day and the hour when their consecration call came, followed by their consecration answer; others grow unconsciously into the Christian life. They know that they are Christians, and cannot remember when they were not. Both are genuine Christian experiences, equally genuine.

We shall probably never hear God's call if we do not put ourselves in the way of hearing it. Isaiah went to church, and there he caught the vision. "All places on this earth have not the same value for the human soul." — *Rev. George A. Gordon, D.D.*

The call will come to us if we are ready to obey it. "At the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny Lord Clyde, better known as Sir Colin Campbell, when asked how long it would take him to get ready to start for India, is said to have replied, 'I am ready now.'" — *C. Neil.*

The call comes to men of prayer, in the habit of close communion with God. John Mackenzie, when a lad, was eager to become a foreign missionary. One day he knelt at the foot of a tree and prayed. "O Lord, send me to the darkest spot on earth." God sent him as a missionary to South Africa, where he labored many years.

LESSON VI (19). — May 7.

ISAIAH'S IDEAL FOR A WORLD AT STRIFE. — Isaiah 2 : 2–4; 11 : 1–9.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah.* — ISA. 2 : 5.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 46 : 1–11.
Reference Material: Ps. 46; Mic. 4 : 1–5; Matt. 5 : 9; Gal. 5 : 22, 23; Phil. 4 : 8, 9.
Primary Topic: HOW TO BE A PEACEMAKER.
Story Material: Gen. 13 : 1–11.
Memory Verse: Blessed are the peacemakers. Matt. 5 : 9.
Junior Topic: SWORDS BEATEN INTO PLOWSHARES.
Memory Verse: Isa. 2 : 4.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: HOW TO MAKE PEACE AND KEEP IT.
Topic for Young People and Adults: CONDITIONS OF PERMANENT PEACE.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Primary Classes do not know much about war, but they know about children's quarrels, and this lesson is to teach them how to put a stop to them. Start with pictures and descriptions of the quarrelsome animals and contrast them with the peaceful animals. Christ takes the fierceness and passion out of human hearts.

The Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Classes will be interested in making a Balance Sheet of War. Give each a sheet of paper ruled down the center. Head it WAR, and on one side print GAIN, on the other side LOSS. On the first side the pupils will make a list of the few points in favor of war, and on the other side the fearful evils of war. Show that even the gains of war can be better obtained in peaceful ways.

The Young People and Adults will not neglect the noble passages from Isaiah, but will save at least half the time to consider the actual means for abolishing war: the League of Nations; the Hague Tribunal; international law; exchange of college students, teachers, and lecturers; travel; world-wide institutions such as the Sunday school, the Y. M. C. A., the Christian Endeavor society, the W. C. T. U.; mails and commerce; above all the Christian church and missions. Divide these in advance among the members of the class, for each to speak on a theme.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Some place this prophecy near the close of Isaiah's life. The prophet died (Beecher) about B. C. 679.

Place. — Solomon's temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Isaiah's world-wide vision and hopes.
Christ the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.
Implements named in the lesson.
Animals named in the lesson.
Obstacles to universal peace.
Reasons for thinking that universal peace is drawing near.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: How to Make Peace and Keep It.

I. THE WORLD WEARY OF WAR, Isa. 2 : 2–4.
The waste of war.
The horrors of war.
The sin of war.
The peace ideal.

II. THE PRINCE OF PEACE, Isa. 11 : 1–5.
The coming Messiah.
A righteous Judge.
A powerful Judge.
A faithful Judge.

III. THE COMING REIGN OF PEACE, Isa. 11 : 6–9.
A little child shall lead them.
They shall not hurt nor destroy.
Earth filled with God's truth.
Conditions of permanent peace.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

For the animals mentioned see Tristram's *Natural History of the Bible* and Wood's *Bible Animals*. On Isa. 2 : 4 and 11 : 6 see Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible*. Chapters in Jowett's *The Whole Armor of God*, Jordan's *The Song and the Soil*, Kingsley's *Westminster Sermons*, Maurice's *On the Sabbath Day*, Jefferson's *Doctrine and Deed*, Gladden's *Things New and Old*, Watkinson's *The Duty of Imperial Thinking*, Phillips Brooks's *Seeking Life*, Spurgeon's *Sermons, Series VI.*, Cox's *The Genesis of Evil*, Wesley's *Sermons, LXVIII.*, McKim's *The Gospel in the Christian Year*. Horton in *The Christian World Pulpit*, No. 1731.

Isa. 2 : 2. And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

I. **THE WORLD WEARY OF WAR,** Isa. 2 : 2–4. The Waste of War. "Give me the money which has been spent in war, and I will purchase every foot of land on the globe. I will clothe every man, woman, and child in an attire of which kings and queens would be proud ; I will build a schoolhouse on every hillside and in every valley over the whole earth; I will build an academy in every town and endow it, a college in every State, and fill it with able professors ; I will crown every hill with a place of worship consecrated to the promulgation of the gospel of peace ; I will support in every pulpit an able teacher of righteousness, so that on every Sabbath morning the chime on one hill should answer the chime on another round the world's wide circumference, and the voice of prayer and the song of praise should ascend like a universal offering to heaven." — *Henry Richard.*

The World War left the eight principal belligerents alone with debts aggregating $186,000,000,000, and the total waste of that war in money and property is estimated conservatively at $338,000,000,000. It left behind it a bankrupt world.

The Horrors of War. In H. G. Wells's book, "The War of the Worlds," he represented our invaders from the planet Mars as able to stride over the country on gigantic stilts, and able to direct to any point they pleased a ray of light so intense that whole regiments were shriveled up where it fell, and able to diffuse a miasma so dark and poisonous that a whole population, like the population of the city of London, could be destroyed by it. . . . Eventually it will be possible to make defensive weapons so commanding that a deadlock will inevitably be reached ; a deadlock in which the armies and navies — and, indeed, the nations — may exhaust themselves without reaching any decisive issue at all." — *Rev. Robert F. Horton, D.D.* That condition was nearly reached during the World War.

On both sides in the World War 59,000,000 men were fighting. Of these 7,668,320 men were killed, and 18,681,257 were wounded, many of these being horribly mutilated and crippled for life. All the wars of the nineteenth century — nine terrible struggles — cost only $33,500,000,000 and 4,449,300 lives. If there is another world war it will be enormously more destructive than this one ; it may wipe out civilization.

The World War took the last vestige of romance from war. Its long-range guns hurled death from unseen sources. Hospitals were bombarded. The Red Cross and the white flag were fired upon. Civilian populations were slaughtered. Unfortified towns were shelled. Women were deliberately murdered or suffered awful and degrading tortures. Poisoned candy was dropped from the clouds. Wells were poisoned. Wonderful cathedrals and rare libraries were maliciously destroyed. Millions lived for months in narrow trenches full of mud. The war was carried into the clouds. It was waged in the depths of the sea. Passenger ships and merchant vessels were sunk without mercy. Horrible contrivances were invented to spray liquid fire on the foe. Great clouds of poison gas were released from exploding shells, gas which killed suddenly or by slow degrees. High explosives made the most ghastly wounds. Nothing was left of war but the most merciless butchery.

The Sin of War. "Thou shalt not kill" stands written in earth's most solemn code of laws. God's own Book directs judges to order the worst criminals to execution, and criminal nations must be dealt with like criminal men ; but the whole business of war is born of sin, is utterly repugnant to the divine Love, and is to be abolished by all means and as soon as possible. The Christmas angels sung of peace on earth. It is the foremost business of Christ's church to make that prophecy true.

The Peace Ideal. Isa. 2 : 2–4 is a brief independent poem, loosely connected with what precedes and follows. It is a battle ground of the critics because the same passage occurs (substantially) in Mic. 4 : 1–4, and its leading verse in Joel 3 : 10. While it is probable that Micah and Joel quoted from Isaiah, and that these words were originally written by Isaiah, yet there are great differences here among scholars.

2. **And it shall come to pass in the latter days.** The closing period of the world's history. **That the mountain of Jehovah's house.** The hill in Jerusalem on which Solomon's temple was built, Mount Zion. **Shall be established on the top of the mountains.** We are not to attribute to Isaiah the grotesque image of one mountain set on top of other mountains ; but the prophet sees Mount Zion as more exalted

3. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.

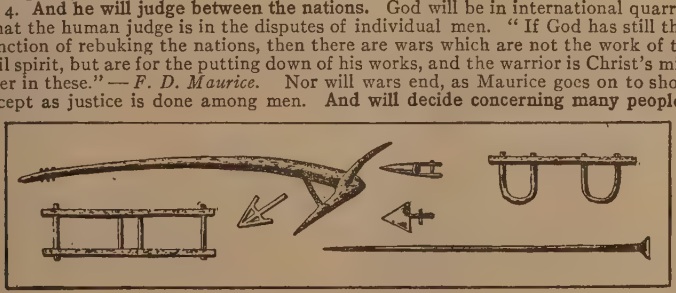
4. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

---

than any other elevation on earth — perhaps in a literal sense, certainly in the sense of its religious and political importance. **And shall be exalted above the hills.** Repetition for emphasis. "Instead of putting the Church into a niche in the temple of the future, to be kept there as a kind of heir-loom,— a well-preserved antique curiosity,— Isaiah insists that the Church *is* the temple, and that all stores and forces of good are to be gathered into it." — *Washington Gladden.* "I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this — a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing, till all the high hills become absorbed, and that which was but a little rising ground before becomes a hill the top whereof reacheth to the seventh heaven. Now we have here a picture of what the church is to be." — *C. H. Spurgeon.* **And all nations shall flow unto it.** Here again Isaiah does not mean a literal migration of all peoples to the narrow confines of Jerusalem, but he sees the time coming when in loving loyalty and obedience all men's hearts shall flow thither. This is true of all Christians to-day. But Isaiah pictures this with the metaphor of an actual pilgrimage. "The highest religion will be attractive; it will have a gentle influence because of what it is in itself. Just because the life of God is in it it cannot be kept in any 'holy city,' men will come for it and carry it forth." — *Prof. W. G. Jordan, D.D.*

3. **And many peoples shall go and say.** Isaiah imagines the nations setting out on this journey to Mount Zion, as pilgrims, and encouraging one another on the way. **Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah.** Zion has ample room for all, in the wide thought of the prophet. Here is none of the exclusiveness which men often associate with Judaism. **To the house of the God of Jacob.** All the world is to go to Jerusalem, but Isaiah cannot forget that they go to worship the God of his people, the God of his great ancestor, Jacob. The one true religion is that of Jacob and his nation. **And he will teach us his ways.** The implication of the Hebrew is that the teaching is to come through prophets like Isaiah. **And we will walk in his paths.** Isaiah is very practical: knowing is always to be followed by doing. **For out of Zion shall go forth the law.** God's authoritative directions for his people everywhere are to come from Mount Zion, that is, from the Hebrew religion which centers there. **And the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.** "The word of Jehovah" is parallel to "the law," and "Jerusalem" to "Zion." We must remember that this entire passage is a poem, written in the balanced lines which are characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

4. **And he will judge between the nations.** God will be in international quarrels what the human judge is in the disputes of individual men. "If God has still that function of rebuking the nations, then there are wars which are not the work of the evil spirit, but are for the putting down of his works, and the warrior is Christ's minister in these." — *F. D. Maurice.* Nor will wars end, as Maurice goes on to show, except as justice is done among men. **And will decide concerning many peoples.**



Plowshares, Yokes, and Goad.

Isa. 11 : 1. And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit.

2. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.

" Disputes which would otherwise have been settled by the sword are referred to the just and impartial arbitrament of Jehovah, whose award is accepted as final." — *Cambridge Bible.* **And they shall beat their swords into plowshares.** When war comes upon a nation unprepared with weapons, plowshares are beaten into swords, as is said in Joel 3 : 10. In the coming time of universal peace the reverse will be the case, and the steel and iron of deadly weapons will be refashioned into useful tools. The plow of Palestine is a wood, but the sharp stick which serves as a plowshare is usually shod with iron. It merely scratches the ground and does not turn it over.

Illustration. After the first historic siege of Antwerp the cannon balls were converted into church bells. Thus also much of the apparatus used in the World War will be used in peaceful life ; for example, gas masks will be used to fight fires in places where deadly fumes are formed. Brass shells, emptied of their fearful charge, are used as standards for household lamps.

And their spears into pruning-hooks. " The metal point of the spear is to be forged into a reaping knife." — *New Century Bible.* The pruning-hook was a small, sickel-shaped knife used in trimming grape-vines. Sword and spear are not to be broken and thrown away, but transformed. " That is to say, the rudely destructive energies of human life are to be changed into constructive energies. What was darkly negative is to become brightly positive. The martial is to be transformed into the pastoral." — *Rev. J. H. Jowett, D.D.* In our own lives, " malice is to be changed into good-will, suspicion into enlightened understanding, cynicism into genial and gracious esteem, and foul hatred into Christ's own strong and fruitful love." — *Jowett.*

Illustration. " As shown experimentally by Professor Balfour Stewart, the blacker the body the brighter will be its light when incandescent. Saul changed into Paul is a fine instance of such a moral transformation." — *Rev. W. L. Watkinson, D.D.*

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. This is a beautiful ideal, which the world, after nearly three millenniums, is yet far from realizing. " Reformers, who at death were content to have lived for the moving forward but one inch of some of their fellow-men, began by believing themselves able to lift the whole world at once. Isaiah was no exception to this human fashion. His first vision was that of a Utopia, and his first belief that his countrymen would immediately realize it." — *George Adam Smith.* **Neither shall they learn war any more.** War — the art of wholesale murder — has been the great study of the thinking animal, man. " What a projection of mind was here on the part of Isaiah : in his day the sword was the signal of power, the spear was greater than the scepter, the warrior was the applauded man, and he who had most chariots was most divine. Isaiah was lifted up above all the paraphernalia of kingdoms and wars and military troubles, and he foresaw the time when peace should have her victories not less renowned than war." — *Joseph Parker.*

II. THE PRINCE OF PEACE, Isa. 11 : 1–5. This beautiful passage, Isa. 11 : 1–9, with its wonderful picture of the Messiah and his reign, is referred by some scholars to the reign of Ahaz, and by others to the close of Isaiah's long life ; its date, however, and the circumstances that drew it forth, cannot be determined. This account of the Messiah could not be fully understood by the people to whom Isaiah spoke. We, looking backward, can read its full meaning. " The Mesianic prophecies of the Old Testament are tidal rivers. They not only run to their sea, which is Christ ; they feel his reflex influence." — *George Adam Smith.* The vast full tide of Christianity runs back into them.

1. **And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse.** Isaiah, in the preceding chapter, has pictured the coming fall of the Assyrian hosts under the likeness of the destruction of a mighty forest. Isaiah's own nation also is to be destroyed, but the stump of the royal family, descended from Jesse and David, will remain in the ground, and it will have life enough to throw out a new shoot. **And a branch out of his root shall bear fruit.** This word " branch " is from the same root as the words, " Nazareth," " Nazarene," and Matthew probably refers to this verse in Matt. 2 : 23.

2. **And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him.** The Messiah was to be a man, but a man wondrously exalted by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. This Spirit

3. And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears;

4. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

" 'rested upon' him ; from first to last never quitted, and never will quit, him." — *Pulpit Commentary*. **The spirit of wisdom and understanding.** These six qualities "are grouped in three pairs. The first pair of virtues are intellectual, the second practical, and the third religious." — *Cambridge Bible*. It is recorded of the child Jesus that he "advanced in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2 : 52), and we know that no man ever spoke with so great wisdom as Jesus Christ (John 7 : 46). **The spirit of counsel and might.** "Counsel" is the planning faculty, and "might" is the power to carry plans to completion. Isaiah himself had foretold of the Messiah (Isa. 9 : 6) that "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God." Christians have "the spirit which sees how to deal with human beings, and has the practical power of making them obey. That power can only be got by loving human beings." — *Charles Kingsley*. **The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.** This knowledge is religious knowledge, knowledge of the will of God. To that is added reverential fear of God, which supplies the motive for the doing of God's will. These two, joined, make up the Old Testament idea of religion.

3. **And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah.** This sentence is of very obscure meaning. It contains no verb in the Hebrew, and is literally (*International Critical Commentary*), "and his enjoyment of the scent of the fear of Jehovah," or, supplying "is," "The scent that he enjoys is the fear of Jehovah." That is, the Messiah shall not only be God-fearing himself, but he shall rejoice when he finds others who are God-fearing. **And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes.** The Messiah's judgments will be perfect because they will not be formed upon externals, as man's must be, but are "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart," so that "all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4 : 12, 13). Thus it is said that Christ knew men's thoughts (Matt. 9 : 4 ; compare John 7 : 24 ; 2 : 24, 25). **Neither decide after the hearing of his ears.** We may *say* "Lord, Lord," but if we do not love Christ in our hearts, our words will have no weight with him. "That is the difference between the bad man and the good man : the bad man endeavors to keep an outwardly respectable surface, and all his iniquity is within, at the very center and core of things ; the good man's imperfections are many, and are broadly seen, but the more deeply you go into his character the more rich he is ; he is honest at the core. By this God will judge us." — *Joseph Parker*.

4. **But with righteousness shall he judge the poor.** There are to be poor people, even in the Messiah's age ; but their lot is not to be made heavier by injustice. **And decide with equity for the meek of the earth.** The "poor in spirit" find favor with the Messiah as well as the poor. Pride renders poverty most unbearable, and most difficult to alleviate. "Blessed are the meek," Isaiah is ready to say with Christ, "for they shall inherit the earth." **And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth.** The Messiah's words of judgment are to be weighty, stern, effective as a rod laid on the bare back of wrongdoers. **And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.** The Judge of all the earth needs no judgment hall, no prison, no officers, no mechanism of execution ; only a word from his dread lips, and the wicked has passed to eternal death.

5. **And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist.** The long, loose Oriental robe needed to be girt up before the wearer could run or do any hard work, hence the girdle came to be a symbol of vigorous action. In naming the Messiah's girdle "righteousness," Isaiah declares that his action will be perfectly just at the same time that it is strong and swift. **And faithfulness the girdle of his loins.** This line is parallel to the preceding, "faithfulness" being a form of "righteousness."

III. THE COMING REIGN OF PEACE, Isa. 11 : 6–9. "This remarkable prophecy of the idyllic state of the brute creation is imitated in the Sibylline Oracles (III. 766 ff.) and more faintly echoed in the Fourth and Fifth Eclogues of Virgil. Similarly, an Arabic poet (Ibn Onein) speaks of 'a righteousness, through which the hungry wolf becomes tame.'" — *Cambridge Bible*.

6. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

6. **And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb.** Now the wolf preys on the lamb, but when the Messiah's reign is complete the two shall live peacefully together. "It is significant of the prophet's sympathy with the animal world that he thinks of that also as sharing in the blessings of redemption." — *Ellicott.* "The wolf of Syria and Palestine is large, light colored, and does not seem to hunt in packs. Like other wolves it is nocturnal. In Palestine it is the special enemy of the sheep and goats." — *International Standard Bible Encylcopedia.* Dogs are domesticated wolves; in the Messiah's reign they will all be domesticated. **And the leopard shall lie down with the kid.** This is even stronger than the foregoing; these two, the one savage, the other a timid victim, shall actually sleep together in amity. The leopard, and the lion next to be mentioned, are animals of the cat tribe; they are to be tamed like the cat. Leopards were once common in Palestine, and are still found there. **And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together.** A "fatling" is an animal specially fattened for eating. "The prophet speaks as from accurate knowledge of the three predaceous animals. The wolf, as a rule, devastates the sheepfolds; the leopard will steal upon and carry off the straggling goat or kid, because it can follow them upon the precipices where no wolf would dare to tread; while the lion, being the strongest and most daring of the three, attacks the herds, and carries away to its lair the oxen which neither leopard nor wolf could move." — *Rev. J. G. Wood.* Lions, once roaming through the woods of Palestine and the cane brakes of the Jordan, were exterminated (Canon Tristram) "probably during the period of the Greek and Roman dominion." **And a little child shall lead them.** Perhaps Isaiah thought of the little child as leading the calf when a young lion comes up; the child is not afraid of the lion, but leads it also.

Illustration. "Baby lies on the rug with dog and cat. He is not so strong or lithe or quick as they are, or even as you are. Yet he takes liberties with them which you cannot take,— and remember, the cat is of one blood with the leopard and the dog with the wolf. He lies upon them, rolls over them, treads on their sensitive feet, pulls them about by fur or hair; and yet by some wonderful instinct they recognize his innocence of ill-intention and respect it. Were you to inflict half the pain on them which he inflicts, they would soon let you know that they had teeth and claws; but they hardly ever turn on him. The little child leads them where he will, and pretty much *as* he will." — *Hastings.*

"Many a man repairs to the house of God for his children's sake who would not come for his own." — *Samuel Cox.*

"How like a child a great principle is as it lives here in our world! It walks the earth with feet so soft that they are always being wounded, and yet so strong, with such a virtue in them, that the ground they tread on changes and grows rich with blossoms under them. Like a child, a great simple principle always impresses us as being just fresh from God." — *Phillips Brooks.*

Then think of the Christ Child. "'A little child shall lead them.' He will lead the prodigal back to his Father. He will lead the publican and the sinner to see the error of his ways. He will lead all the erring sons of men into the paths of penitence. And he will do this by the constraining power of his own infinite and unspeakable love." — *Rev. Randolph H. McKim, D.D.*

7. **And the cow and the bear shall feed** (together, in the same pasture). It is a she-bear, the female animals being named after the male. **Their young ones shall lie down together.** And we must remember how fierce the animals are in defence of their young. **And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.** This fierce carnivorous animal could in no more striking way show the change of its nature.

8. **And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp.** There are many serpents in Palestine, and it is uncertain which of them is meant by the word translated "asp." Canon Tristram thinks it was the cobra, "well known in southern Palestine, the serpent which is usually employed by the serpent charmers, and which

9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

is in the habit of concealing itself in holes in walls and rocks. When alarmed or disturbed, it raises itself into an upright posture, supported on the lower vertebræ of the tail, and bounds forward with great force." **And the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.** The word translated adder refers to an unknown serpent which Tristram considers to be, perhaps, the great yellow viper, "the largest of the vipers found in the Holy Land, as well as one of the most dangerous." Once Canon Tristram saw this viper spring at a quail and miss it, making the least possible puncture in the flesh of one of the bird's wings; the quail died in a few seconds.

Cobra.

9. **They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.** After the analogy of Mount Zion, the temple hill of Jerusalem, the Messiah's kingdom is thought of as a holy mountain, with room enough on it for all the nations of the earth to worship; and it is to be a mountain of perfect peace and good will. **For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah.** "A fruitful knowledge, guiding and influencing conduct, seems to be intended." — *Rawlinson.* It is not enough to know God merely with the head. If any one would be convinced of the truth of this prophecy let him study the sad picture of the world given by John Wesley in his sermon on this text, and compare it with the progress made by the Christian Church and Christian missions during the century and a half that has elapsed. If this progress continues, Isaiah's glorious prophecy will be fullfiled long before another century and a half has passed. **As the waters cover the sea.** The Mediterranean Sea of course is meant, the largest body of water the prophet knew about. The true worship and the life of peace will fill the earth, when Messiah reigns, as completely as the waters of the sea fill their bed.

SEVEN CONDITIONS OF PERMANENT PEACE. While evil passions are strong among men, we shall need force to curb them. When the police of Boston struck, the city saw an orgy of pillage and crime. "I do not see how we can say a standing army is a libel on our civilization unless we are ready to say that the police force of our city is an impertinence and a disgrace." — *Rev. Charles E. Jefferson, D.D.* Thus also the world organization of nations will for a long time need to preserve peace by an international police force.

But permanent peace is not to come through force, any more than individual righteousness can come through the courts and the police. The conditions necessary for it are these:

1. Mutual knowledge, based on friendly intercourse. We must overleap the bounds of strange languages and customs, and learn to see other nations as they really are. In the light of this knowledge prejudices will melt away.

2. Unfettered intercourse, ready communications, much travel, wide commerce. All these bind the nations together.

3. Justice and opportunity. The careful investigation and removal of all real grievances among the nations. Free scope for legitimate expansion. Ready access to fair international tribunals, with full power to enforce the right.

4. International disarmament, a world police taking the place of national armies and navies.

5. A world legislative, executive, and judicial system, to do for world affairs what national legislatures, executives, and courts do for the separate nations.

6. The full willingness of the nations to yield their international interests to the world government.

7. The growth of a Christian spirit, which is fundamental. This spirit in honor prefers other nations as well as men. This spirit seeks not its own, but each its neighbor nation's good. This spirit teaches each nation to imitate Christ, who pleased not himself. By losing their own lives nations as well as men will truly save them.

LESSON VII (20). — May 14.

HEZEKIAH LEADS HIS PEOPLE BACK TO GOD. — 2 Chron. 30 : 1–27.

PRINT vs. 1–9, 13.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.* — 2 Chron. 30 : 9.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 96 : 1–10.
Reference Material: 2 Chron. 29 ; 31 ; 32 ; 34 : 29–33 ; Hosea 14 ; Amos 9 : 7–15.
Primary Topic: A King Who Worshiped God.
Memory Verse: Oh come, let us worship and bow down ;
Let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker. Ps. 95 : 6.
Junior Topic: Hezekiah's Great Passover.
Memory Verse: 2 Chron. 30 : 9.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: Putting Religion First.
Topic for Young People and Adults: Wise Methods of Reform.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may be interested at the outset if the teacher produces a large, official-looking envelope, opens it, takes out a large sheet of paper and posts it in front of the class. On it he has printed "A PROCLAMATION! *Come to Church!*" And then will follow a paraphrase of Hezekiah's message, signed at the end "HEZEKIAH BENAHAZ. By His Majesty, ISAIAH BENAMOZ, *Secretary of State.*" Make this a lesson in church-going, the reasons for it, and the spirit in which we should go.

The Older Classes, after making the events clear and vivid, will go on to study wise methods of reform. If possible, have present some one definitely interested in some great reform, such as the temperance reform, political reform, or some phase of social reform. Ask him to tell how Hezekiah's methods apply to-day. Appoint some member of the class to speak on modern reform methods that are *not* to be approved. Leave plenty of time for questions and discussion.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher dates the great passover of Hezekiah at B.C. 722, the year of Hezekiah's accession to the throne. Beecher dates the beginning of the final siege of Samaria two years later, B. C. 720. Hoshea, king of Israel, was probably a captive in Assyria at this time, Shalmaneser having defeated him in battle.

Place. — Jerusalem, the action centering in Solomon's temple.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The reigns of Jotham and Ahaz.
The character of Hezekiah.
The temple and what it stood for.
Causes of the neglect of the temple.
Religion and national unity.
The meaning of the passover in Jewish life.
How the passover was — and is — celebrated.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Hezekiah's Great Reform.

I. A Failure and a Determination, vs. 1–5.
The passover neglected.
A necessary postponement.
A wise decision.
What to do with our failures.

II. An Inspiring Summons, vs. 6–9.
A call to repentance.
A solemn warning.
A summons to service.
A promise of pardon.
The call of religion to-day.

III. The Reform and Its Results, vs. 10–27.
The great assembly.
Jerusalem purified.
Priests and people sanctified.
A doubled passover.
Joy in the service of God.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Edersheim's *History of Israel and Judah.* Parker's *People's Bible.* Maclaren's *Expositions.* Chapters on Hezekiah in Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible,* by Rowland in *Men of the Old Testament,* in Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible,* in Geikie's *Landmarks of Old Testament History,* and in Amos R. Wells's *Bible Miniatures.* Geikie's *Hours with the Bible.* Drs. Strong, Allen, and Dunning, in *Monday Club Sermons* for 1898, 1904, and 1911.

1. And Hĕz-ĕ-kī′-ăh sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Mă-năs′-sĕh, that they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel.

I. A FAILURE AND A DETERMINATION, vs. 1–5. Isaiah began his prophesying in the year in which King Uzziah died. Uzziah's son Jotham proved to be an echo of his father, no better, no worse. He put down a revolt of the Ammonites, but he allowed idolatry and many other foul practices to flourish.

Assyria in the time of Hezekiah.

His son Ahaz was perhaps the worst of the kings of Judah. Early in his reign he was attacked by Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, and at the same time by the Edomites from the south and Philistines from the west. In his despair Ahaz called to his aid the powerful Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, who overcame Syria and Israel, and Judah in return became tributary to him. Ahaz paid a humble visit to Assyria, and on his return went over to heathenism body and soul. He even established in the valley of Hinnom, at Tophet, close under the walls of Jerusalem, the worship of the savage Ammonite god Moloch, whose brazen statue was a furnace into which living children were flung. Ahaz offered up one of his own sons in this awful rite. Superstitions were everywhere observed. Soothsayers were everywhere consulted. An idolatrous altar was set up in Solomon's temple, with the consent of the high priest. Finally the temple furniture was despoiled, the lamps allowed to go out, the sacrifices discontinued, the great doors closed, and the sacred edifice left to decay. Isaiah warned him, threatened and rebuked him, and proved the religion of Jehovah true by wonderful signs; but all was in vain. God did not allow this evil king to reign long. Ahaz was called to his account in the prime of life, when only thirty-six, leaving as his successor his son Hezekiah, who proved to be his opposite in all particulars.

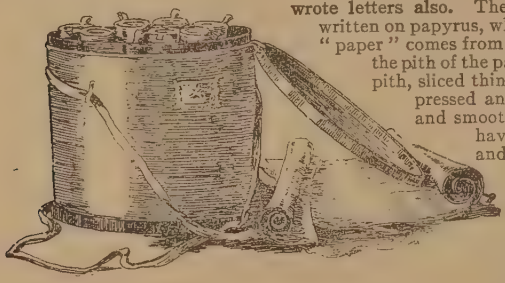
1. **And Hezekiah.** His name means "Jehovah strengthens." His mother's name was Abijah, "daughter of Jehovah," and if her name indicates her character, she may have been the cause of her son's piety. "Of all the monarchs who ruled over the kingdom of Judah after its separation from Israel, Hezekiah is the most remarkable, and the interest which attaches to the history of the separate kingdom culminates in him. He was a statesman, a warrior, a poet, an antiquarian, an engineer, and the leader of a most important religious movement." — *Rawlinson.* It is this movement that we are now to study. Hezekiah, at the very beginning of his reign, had set himself to reforming the religious condition of his capital. He first repaired the great doors of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 29). Summoning the Levites, he had them cleanse the interior of the temple, casting out into the valley of the Kidron all the heathen abominations they found there, and restoring the sacred altars and utensils. Then Hezekiah re-established sacrificial worship in the temple with great sacrifices, with songs and the blowing of trumpets, a great multitude joining him with rejoicings. But this was not enough. The loyal heart of the king yearned to restore the great religious festivals which God had appointed, and to that he next set his hand. **Sent to all Israel and Judah.** Hezekiah would repeat the good old times when the united country, all the Hebrews, came together at the passover. It was a good opportunity to make advances to the northern kingdom, to Israel, because it was now very weak, threatened by the Assyrians, and, if ever, would be glad to forget the bitter past and be reconciled to Judah. "If anything can overcome littleness, bitterness, bigotry, sense of transient or permanent wrong, it is a

2. For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3. For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

---

great pentecostal enthusiasm. It is not a little fire that can melt some metals ; we need a whole furnace. — *Joseph Parker.* **And wrote letters also.** The message was probably written on papyrus, which was paper (our word "paper" comes from "papyrus") made from the pith of the papyrus reed, layers of this pith, sliced thin, being laid transversely, pressed and pasted together, dried and smoothed. The ink used may have been made of lampblack and gum. **To Ephraim and Manasseh.** These two tribes, descended from the two sons of Joseph, were the principal tribes of the Northern Kingdom. The message was sent to them with particular care. **That they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem.** Remember that Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, had set up the golden calves at Beth-el and Dan in order to prevent the northern tribes from doing this very thing. **To keep the passover.** This great festival was so called because it commemorated the night in Egypt when the death angel *passed over* the homes of the Hebrews, marked by the sacrificial blood on the lintels, and killed the firstborn in all the homes of the Egyptians. This was the tenth plague, and so terrified Pharaoh that he let the people of Israel depart. "Of all the festivals in Israel, the most solemn was that of the passover. It commemorated Israel's national birthday as the redeemed of the Lord, and pointed forward to that better deliverance of which it was the emblem." — *Edersheim.* **Unto Jehovah, the God of Israel.** Jehovah, Hezekiah reminds the Northern Kingdom, is their God as well as the God of Judah.



Parchment-Case and Rolls.

2. **For the king had taken counsel.** This important step, looking to a reunited nation, was not taken on the impulse of one man, though he were the king. The wiser the man, the more certain is he to ask advice and consult others. **And his princes.** The officers of his court : he does not consult the priests. **And all the assembly in Jerusalem.** "The assembly is the common term for a meeting of the people called together by a crier." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* **To keep the passover in the second month.** The passover began on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish ecclesiastical year, the month Abib (later called Nisan), which corresponds to our March-April. "The Law allowed individuals to keep the passover in the second month instead of the first, if they were prevented by some temporary hindrance (Num. 9 : 10, 11), and this permission Hezekiah thought might be extended to the whole community." — *Dummelow.*

3. **For they could not keep it at that time,** at the usual time, the fourteenth of Nisan. **Because the priests had not sanctified themselves.** They had become ceremonially unclean while the temple and its services were abandoned. **In sufficient number.** The scarcity of priests is noted in connection with the sacrifices that had already been offered in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 29 : 34). So great a throng as Hezekiah was summoning would require many priests to kill and offer up the animals they would bring for sacrifices. **Neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.** Of course the passover could have been celebrated by a very small company, but it was Hezekiah's special desire to use the festival to restore the worship of Jehovah in the nation at large.

4. And the thing was right in the eyes of the king and of all the assembly.
5. So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Bē′-ĕr-shē′-bà even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem : for they had not kept it in great numbers in such sort as it is written.
6. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

---

4. **And the thing was right in the eyes of the king.** This implies careful considèration ; Hezekiah did not hastily decide to depart from the ancient rule even in the matter of the month. Sometimes the literal obedience to God's law is superseded by obedience according to the spirit of it, but only after the conscience is convinced that literal obedience is not best at the time. **And of all the assembly.** Hezekiah did not impose his judgment on the assembly ; he stated the case, and their judgment confirmed his. Here is a foreshadowing of our two-chamber legislatures, house and senate.

5. **So they established a decree.** The people evidently joined with the king in this act. **To make proclamation throughout all Israel.** "We may reasonably suppose that this took place with the consent of Hoshea, king of Israel ; for he has the best character given him of all the kings of Israel." — *Rev. Edward Wells, D.D.* That is, if he was then on the throne ; he might have been a captive in Assyria. **From Beer-sheba even to Dan.** Beer-sheba is the famous residence of Abraham in the extreme south of Judah ;. Dan is a town in the extreme north of Israel. This is a proverbial phrase for the whole of Palestine. **That they should come to keep the passover.** It was one of the most important invitations in all history. **For they had not kept it in great numbers in such sort as it is written.** The original institution of the feast (Ex. 12 : 6) required all the nation to observe it.

WHAT TO DO WITH OUR FAILURES. 1. *Follow Hezekiah's example.* "We may all ask ourselves if there is anything in our lives which we are cherishing, paying to it the adoration and love due only to God our Creator — anything we are making an idol of, burning incense to it, the clouds of smoke from which sometimes obscure the true vision of our God. If so, let us ask God that he will bestow upon us the righteous zeal of Hezekiah, that we may utterly destroy and put away from us all hindrances to our love and worship and service of God." — *Quoted by Hastings.*

2. *Get the love of God in our hearts.* "There came to Hezekiah at a certain moment of his life the sense of a great love, the love of God. I know not when it broke upon him ; judging from the concluding verse of 2 Chron. 29, I should say its influence was sudden — dating from the solemn hour of his coronation." — *George Matheson.* This love will redeem any life, any nation, from failure.

3. *Determine, as Hezekiah did, to reform.* Now is the acceptable time. Failures may be transformed into successes if taken in season, before they become chronic. Indeed, with God's help, "it is never too late to mend." Any one that attempts reform in the spirit of Hezekiah will find that

> "Defeat may be victory in disguise,
> The lowest ebb is the turn of the tide."
> — *Henry W. Longfellow* ("*Loss and Gain*").

II. AN INSPIRING SUMMONS, vs. 6–9. It would be hard to find anywhere an invitation couched more graciously and tactfully, and yet without violating principle, or lowering ideals. In writing it a difficult task was triumphantly performed, by God's grace.

6. **So the posts went with the letters.** We can see the couriers running along the narrow paths among the hills, along the Jordan, beside the Sea of Galilee, spreading out in every direction. **Saying, Ye children of Israel.** "Israel" was the ancient name of the united nation, as all were descended from Israel (Jacob). **Turn again unto Jehovah.** When Jeroboam and the ten tribes seceded from the Southern Kingdom, they turned of necessity from the worship of Jehovah in the ways which he had appointed. **The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.** This list of patriarchs would

7. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, who trespassed against Jehovah, the God of their fathers, so that he gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

8. Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were; but yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve Jehovah your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you.

9. For if ye turn again unto Jehovah, your brethen and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive, and shall come again into this land: for Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

Egyptian Sais or Forerunner.

By permission of the Sunday School Times Company. From "Studies in Oriental Social Life."

recall to them the glorious history of the Hebrews, and God's conspicuous mercy to them. **That he may return.** God cannot return to us until we return to him; but, like the father of the prodigal, he sees us when we are far off, on our way back, and runs to meet us. **To the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.** Tiglath-Pileser, who had overrun Israel in the days of King Ahaz of Judah, and his successor Shalmaneser. The latter, when King Hoshea of Israel stopped paying tribute, relying on Egypt to help him, promptly seized and imprisoned Hoshea, and soon began a three-year siege of Samaria which may have been in progress at this time, though Professor Beecher dates it two years later.

7. **And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren.** Beginning with Jeroboam, the history of the Northern Kingdom had been one long record of idolatry and scorn of Jehovah. **Who trespassed against Jehovah, the God of their fathers.** The God who had brought all blessings upon their fathers and the nation, while the heathen gods had brought only misery, shame, and ruin. **So that he gave them up to desolation, as ye see.** "The disasters of the Assyrian invasion were most recent." — *International Critical Commentary.* "The teaching of all the Old Testament history is condensed into this one sentence, which points to facts as plain as tragical. In deepest truth it applies to each of us; for, if we trespass against God, we draw down evil on our heads with both hands, and shall find that sin brings the worst desolation — that which sheds gloom over a godless soul." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

8. **Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were.** "Hardening the neck is the gesture of disobedience, as giving the hand is that of submission." — *Murphy.* **But yield yourselves unto Jehovah.** "Literally, 'Give the hand.'" — *Cambridge Bible.* "Before you can come into communion with him you must come into covenant with him." — *Matthew Henry.* **And enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever.** Jerusalem and its temple were not temporary institutions, that could be chosen or cast aside at the whim of Jeroboam or any one else; they were to be the perpetual meeting-place of God and man. **And serve Jehovah your God.** Worship is never enough; it must always be followed by the practical service of our lives. **That his fierce anger may turn away from you.** Hezekiah worshiped a God of love, but also a God of justice. He knew that Jehovah would gladly turn toward a repentant people; but he knew also that God hated sin, and while men chose sin they chose his fierce anger.

9. **For if ye turn again unto Jehovah.** Note the repetition of "turn," "return," "turn again," "turn away." It is like a majestic refrain running through Hezekiah's

13. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly.

appeal. **Your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive.** Tiglath-Pileser had led many into captivity, and the event of our lesson may have occurred after the final capture of Samaria and exile of a large part of the northern tribes. **And shall come again into this land.** This actually happened, for many from Judah, at least, but not until they had spent many weary years in exile, and had learned to grow sick of their rebellion against Jehovah. **For Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful.** "Strong, sunny confidence in God shines from the whole message, and reaches its climax in this closing assurance. The evil results of rebellion are not omitted, but they are not dwelt upon. The true magnet to draw wanderers back to God is the loving proclamation of his love." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **And will not turn away his face from you.** That is the real punishment for sin, alienation from God, the turning away of his loving face, and not the material loss and pain, however severe these may be. **If ye return unto him.** It is well that this "if" stands last and is emphasized. Our fate is in our own hands. God will not force us to seek him, for that would be no real seeking. *If* we seek him, however, we shall surely find him.

THE CALL OF RELIGION TO-DAY. "The summons to return unto God is addressed to us all even more urgently than to Israel. God himself invites us by the voice of his providences, by his voice within, and by the voice of Jesus himself, who is ever saying to each of us, by his death and passion, by his resurrection and ascension, 'Turn ye! turn ye! why will ye die?'" — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Illustration. A great multitude of young fellows were turned to religion by the stress of the World War. Said a soldier to the Dean of Manchester: "I used to go to church sometimes before the war; but I tell you what it is, sir, out here in the trenches we fellows come back to religion with a bump."

"Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was doing good;
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude." — *John G. Whittier.*

III. THE REFORM AND ITS RESULTS, vs. 10–27. HOW THE SUMMONS WAS RECEIVED. Swift runners ("posts") were sent out over the entire country, north and south, and made known everywhere the invitation of Hezekiah. "There was no general response on the part of the northern remnants, except contemptuous refusal of Hezekiah's invitation. Stray pilgrims alone journeyed to Jerusalem from five of the northern tribes." — *New Century Bible.* These five were Asher, Manasseh, Ephraim, Issachar, and Zebulun (vs. 11, 18).

"The pious enthusiasm of Judah stood out in vivid contrast to the stubborn impenitence of the majority of the ten tribes. By the grace of God, Judah was of one heart to observe the feast, so that there was gathered in Jerusalem a very great assembly of worshipers, surpassing even the great gatherings which the Chronicler had witnessed at the annual feasts." — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.*

THE GREAT ASSEMBLY. 13. **And there assembled at Jerusalem much people.** Even though the Northern Kingdom was not well represented, Judah more than made up for it. **To keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month.** The passover was called the feast of unleavened bread because only bread made without yeast was eaten during the passover week. "They had no leaven in their houses on the night of the passover in Egypt, and consequently the dough which they seized in their hurried flight was unleavened (Ex. 12 : 8, 34, 39). It was baked thus. Henceforth unleavened bread was associated in their minds, not only with the thought of sincerity and truth, which was the essential idea, but also with the hurried flight from Egypt (Deut. 16 : 3)." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary.* **A very great assembly.** Enormous numbers came together in Jerusalem at the passover seasons in later times. Herod's temple could hold not fewer than 210,000 persons (Edersheim). The passover crowd was larger than the city could possibly accomodate were it not (Farrar) for the extremely simple mode of life of Orientals and the fewness of their wants.

JERUSALEM PURIFIED. The temple had been purified, but the Holy City, Jerusalem, was still full of the idolatrous altars and images which Ahaz had introduced. The passover lamb was to be eaten in every home and its blood sprinkled on every doorpost. It is never enough to purify the church unless the home is pure. All these abominations were therefore thrown out, and it may have been at this time

that Hezekiah "even broke in pieces the sacred symbol, the brazen serpent once uplifted by Moses (Num. 21 : 8, 9), because the people worshiped it; and he publicly called it *Nehushtan*, a mere piece of brass." — *Principal Alfred Rowland, D.D.* See 2 Kings 18 : 4.

Hezekiah's Great Passover.

Priests and People Sanctified. Another difficulty arose. Large numbers of the people were unclean according to the law of Moses, and that law (Lev. 15 : 31) threatened death if any while unclean should attend service in the sanctuary. Nor would it do to send them back home, after coming so far, because of failure to observe rites of which they were ignorant. "Possibly there were already signs of an outbreak of pestilence; at any rate, the dread of divine punishment for sacrilegious presumption would distress the whole assembly." — *Expositor's Bible.* But Hezekiah was a man of prayer and laid the difficulty before God, praying earnestly that God would pardon this uncleanness of the people, since they had set their hearts to seek God. And the Lord heard the prayer of the devout king, and healed the people from the outbreaking pestilence.

A Doubled Passover. "Then came the great celebration, with such glory of chants and instrumental music, such wealth of gifts for sacrifice, such vast multitudes in attendance, and such general gladness, as recalled the solemnity of the dedication of the temple by Solomon. Seven days, the legal duration, were not long enough for such a jubilee; the feast was prolonged for seven days more." — *Cunningham Geikie.* When our hearts are in our religion, we shall not watch the clock during divine service or seek excuses to stay home from it. We shall rather seek opportunities to attend church more frequently and to stay longer when there.

Joy in the Service of God. Like the people of Hezekiah's day, "the early Christians 'took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.' So always when children of God come before him with confidence in one another, with desire to help one another into closer fellowship with him, with common purpose to do good, they experience joy, the noblest and most satisfying that this world has known." — *Rev. A. E. Dunning, D.D.*

"There is nothing better for a community than arousing men to come together before God in his house." — *Rev. William Allen Knight, D.D.*

"One purposeful life in a church, be it that of minister, deacon, superintendent, teacher, scholar, may effect a change as marked as that which Hezekiah wrought in the first year of his reign." — *Rev. William E. Strong, D.D.*

"Serve God by doing common actions in a heavenly spirit." — *C. H. Spurgeon.*

Illustration. In one of the great battles of the Civil War a recruit who had lost his company in the confusion timidly approached General Sheridan and asked where he should step in. "Step in?" thundered the general in a voice that terrified the already frightened recruit more than all the cannonading and musketry, "step in anywhere. There's fighting all along the line."

"A little in Christ's hand goes far.
Yield thy poor best and muse not how or why,
Lest one day, seeing all about thee spread
A mighty crowd and marvelously fed,
Thy heart break out into a bitter cry:
'I might have furnished, I, yea, even I,
The two small fishes and the barley bread.'"
— *Frederick Langbridge.*

"All life will flash into beauty, and tower into greatness, and be smoothed out to easiness, if in all we are consciously serving the Lord." — "*Ian Maclaren.*"

WISE METHODS OF REFORM. "The best way to fight against evil is to meet it on its own ground, with its own weapons. The way, for instance, to attack intemperance is to make the sober life beautiful and full of interest." — *Henry van Dyke.* Thus Hezekiah conquered heathenism by making the true religion more attractive.

"The only way to regenerate the world is to do the duty which lies nearest to us, and not to hunt after grand, far-fetched ones for ourselves." — *Charles Kingsley.* So Hezekiah began with Jerusalem and cleaned up the temple before he sent his message to Dan and Beer-sheba. Begin with your own home, your neighborhood, your church, your town.

Hezekiah based his great reform on the will of God, not on his own will. He did not compromise with sin, but he was tactful and kindly with sinners. He did not try to do his work alone, but associated with himself all the helpers he could obtain. He was enterprising, adventurous, eager to spread the truth as fast and far as possible. In all this he is to be imitated to-day.

LESSON VIII (21). — May 21.

HILKIAH'S GREAT DISCOVERY. — 2 Chronicles 34 : 14–33.

PRINT vs. 14–16, 29–32.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*
And light unto my path. — Ps. 119 : 105.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 19 : 7–14.
Reference Material: Deut. 6 : 6–9; Josh. 1 : 8; Col. 3 : 16; 2 Tim. 2 : 15; 3 : 14–16.
Primary Topic: HOW THE LOST BIBLE WAS FOUND.
Memory Verse: Thy word have I laid up in my heart. Ps. 119 : 11.
Junior Topic: HILKIAH DISCOVERS THE LOST BIBLE.
Memory Verse: Ps. 119 : 11.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: HOW TO MAKE THE BIBLE OUR OWN.
Topic for Young People and Adults: THE AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in the story of the lost Bible and how it was found. Use this lesson to urge the great gains which come from Bible reading, and to show the children how to read their Bibles in the best way. Make a special effort to get the children to bring their own Bibles to the school on this Sunday, and if any have no Bibles, see that they are provided with them. Introduce the pupils to some simple plan of Bible marking, such as writing in the margin after favorite verses the initials of the themes of the verses, such as P opposite verses about prayer, H after verses about happiness, and W after verses about work. Give each pupil a blank book in which he may copy his favorite verses under an alphabetical list of topics which you will give out: Anger, Bible, Christ, Duty, etc. Offer some little reward for all the books neatly filled within a certain time. Show the class how to use the concordance and Bible index.

The Older Classes will be tempted to spend too much time discussing what part of the Bible was found by Hilkiah. Two members of the class may summarize the arguments on both sides, but very briefly. It will be more profitable, after the lesson facts are discussed, to have a number of brief talks, by the best Bible students available, on the methods of Bible study that each has found most helpful.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Josiah, according to Beecher, was born B. C. 646, became king B. C. 638, began his reforms B. C. 627, and the law was discovered B. C. 622.

Place. — Jerusalem; in Solomon's temple.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The character of Manasseh.
The reign of Amon.
The character of Josiah.
The "book of the covenant."
The influence of women in religion.
The teaching of the Bible regarding the Bible.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: How to Make the Bible Our Own.

I. HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO BE LOST 2 Chron. 31 : 1—33 : 25.
Hezekiah's glorious reign.
Manasseh's sins, punishment, and repentance.
Amon's evil reign and tragic death.
How men lose the Bible to-day.

II. HOW THE LOST BIBLE WAS FOUND, vs. 1–18.
The zeal of the young Josiah.
Thorough-going reforms.
The repair of the temple.
The discovery of the book of the law.
How men to-day discover the Bible.

III. HOW THE DISCOVERED BIBLE WAS OBEYED, vs. 19–33.
Josiah's grief and dismay.
Huldah's prophecy of punishment and comfort.
The Bible read to the people.
Bible covenants renewed and kept.
The Bible in our lives.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

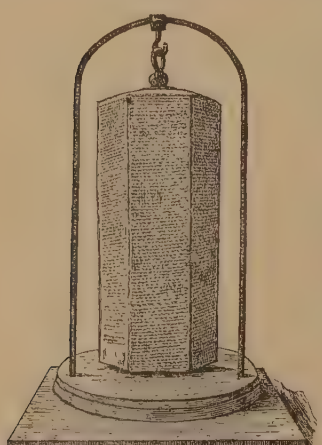
Gray's *Christian Worker's Commentary*. On Huldah, Mrs. Sangster's *Women of the Bible* and Horton's *Women of the Old Testament*. On Josiah, Greenhough in *Men of the Old Testament*, Geikie in *Old Testament Characters* and *Landmarks of Old Testament History*. On the times of Josiah, Maurice in *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*. Lorimer's *The Modern Crisis in Religion*. Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Vol. VIII. Henson's *The Four Faces*. Phelps's *Studies of the Old Testament*.

I. HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO BE LOST, 2 Chron. 31 : 1 — 33 : 25. Ours is a Bible school. Our main work here is to study the Bible and learn how to use it in our lives. If the Bible were taken out of our lives, and out of our town, and out of the history of our nation, everything would be different; we should be back in the cruel and bitter days of savagery. But this is just what happened to the Jews of old: they lost their Bible. Our lesson tells how they lost it, how they found it, and what was the result of finding the Bible. Surely for a Bible school no lesson could be more interesting and profitable. And first we are to see how the Bible came to be lost.

HEZEKIAH'S GLORIOUS REIGN. After Hezekiah's great passover he allowed the throngs, in their new zeal for the true religion, to swarm over the cities of Judah, tearing down the heathen altars and destroying all the implements of idolatry. Indeed, they even extended their crusade to the southern part of the Northern Kingdom, and rooted out idolatry from there.

Great prosperity came to this good king. His extended commerce was gainful. Much wealth filled his coffers. Many rich gifts were lavished upon the temple. He was victor in his war with the Philistines.

While Hezekiah was so blessedly rewarded for his fealty to Jehovah, the Assyrians captured Samaria, and the Northern Kingdom fell into their hands, many thousands of the people being carried into exile. In the meanwhile Hezekiah had thrown off the Assyrian yoke, refusing to pay tribute.



The Taylor Cylinder.

Found at Nineveh in 1830 and now in the British Museum. Inscription on it an account by Sennacherib of his "victory" over Hezekiah.

The king of Assyria was the energetic and able Sennacherib. On his ascension he found many enemies awaiting him, and was compelled to subdue in turn Babylonia, Phœnicia, Syria, and Philistia. Then he marched against Hezekiah with an army of at least 200,000, swept over Judah, took many captives, ravaged the land, and laid siege to Jerusalem. Hezekiah was obliged to buy him off by emptying his own treasury and that of the temple, and even stripping the gold from the temple doors.

But when the Assyrians had returned to their own land, Hezekiah set himself to escape from his chains by forming an alliance with Egypt. Sennacherib learned of this and at once marched against Egypt. His armies were stopped by the resistance of Lachish, which withstood a long siege. Seeking to hasten matters, the Assyrians turned in rage toward Jerusalem. They reached Libnah, about ten miles from Jerusalem, and sought to subdue it before proceeding further.

In the meantime Isaiah was encouraging Hezekiah, and prophesying stoutly that the Lord would come to his help. Hezekiah went into the temple and prayed most earnestly for rescue. That very night the Lord smote the Assyrian army in some mysterious way,

and in the morning all but a few of the great host of 185,000 were dead men. The remnant, with Sennacherib, were in full flight to Nineveh. This miraculous intervention of the Almighty was the most striking event in one of the most glorious reigns of Hebrew history.

Sennacherib.

Translation of the Inscription: "King of Nations, King of Assyria." From a slab from his own palace in Nineveh.

"The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold;
Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host, with their banners, at sunset were seen.
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.
For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed:
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!
And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
Though through it there rolled not the breath of his pride.
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpets unblown,
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

— *Byron's "Hebrew Melodies."*

MANASSEH'S SINS, PUNISHMENT, AND REPENTANCE. Doubtless Manasseh, the son and successor of Hezekiah, was carefully reared while his father was alive; but he was a mere lad when he came to the throne, and at once he fell under the influence of godless nobles who had chafed under the religious reign of Hezekiah. Manasseh, thus led astray, became a bitter hater of Jehovah and of the true religion. He brought back again the heathenism which his father had put down, and even introduced into the temple the abominable worship of Astarte, the love-goddess of the Phœnicians. He further introduced a novelty, perhaps from Arabia, the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, altars to which were set up in the temple courts. Worst of all, he imitated Ahaz and offered up one or more of his children to Moloch, having them burned to death in the flaming statue of the fire-god. Magic, sorcery, and the crudest forms of superstition were in vogue. With all this a terrible persecution of the followers of Jehovah was inaugurated, and Jerusalem ran red with their blood. It was in this persecution, so tradition states, that the supreme prophet of the Old Testament, Isaiah, who was nearly ninety years old, was cruelly sawn asunder.

Manasseh is mentioned as a tributary on a cylinder of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. Later, however, he plotted to throw off the foreign yoke, and an army was sent which ravaged his territory, and got possession of Manasseh himself by a stratagem. The Jewish king was treated cruelly. Rings were passed through his lips, a thong was tied to them, and by this thong the Jewish monarch was led to Babylon before Esarhaddon. Thrown into prison, he daily expected execution, but fervently prayed for deliverance. These prayers were wonderfully granted, and Manasseh was sent back to Jerusalem. There the repentant king, his heart full of gratitude to God, did all he could to repair his former evil, to drive out idolatry, and exalt the worship of Jehovah. He died after a long reign of fifty-five years, and left his throne to his son Amon.

AMON'S EVIL REIGN AND TRAGIC DEATH. Amon

A Clay Figure of Astarte. From Tell Ta'annek. Height, 4 1/3 inches.

14. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hĭl-kī'-ăh the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah *given* by Moses.

---

was won over by the same group of dissolute nobles that had debauched the mind of his father in the first part of his reign. He set himself to bring back heathenism in every vile form, and would have rivalled the wickedness of Manasseh's worst days if the shortness of his two-year reign had permitted. The evils he had stirred up were his own undoing, for his base followers conspired against him, for some unknown reason, and slew him in his own palace. This tragic death was only one of the many sad results that followed, directly or indirectly, from Manasseh's years of disobedience to God.

How Men Lose the Bible To-day. It was during these two evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon that the Jews lost their Bible. There was no room for the law of God in that flood of heathenism. There were no temple services to keep its precepts fresh in the people's minds, and even the priests and Levites were doubtless widely corrupted.

Dr. George C. Lorimer, in a powerful sermon on this event, tells how the Bible may be lost to-day: "It is partly lost beneath the rubbish of wild interpretations. It is partly lost under the weight of specious and glittering idolatries. In some instances the shadow of the church obscures the sacred volume, and we listen to her and ignore it. The Bible is now partly lost among the confusion of extreme and contradictory criticisms." Worldliness, infidelity, bigotry, sacerdotalism, unbelieving and unreasonable scholarship, all of these hide the Bible, bury it, keep it from doing its blessed work in the world.

"Even though faith in the Bible be not gone, it may be practically lost through sheer neglect. We are so cumbered with the cares of life, so infatuated with the pleasures of life, so hot-footed in the pursuit of the almighty dollar, that we have left little or no time for the perusal of the Bible." — *Rev. P. S. Henson, D.D.*

II. HOW THE LOST BIBLE WAS FOUND, vs. 1–18. The Zeal of the Young Josiah. "As if to show us that religion depends on a man's self (under God, who gives grace), on the state of his heart, not on outward circumstances, Manasseh was the son of the pious Hezekiah, and Josiah was the son of the wicked Amon." — *John Henry Newman.*

Josiah means "Jehovah supports him." He was only eight years old when he came to the throne, and when he was only twelve he began to "seek after the God of David." Perhaps it was his mother, Jedidah, who turned the lad's thoughts toward the God of his great-hearted ancestor, David. In many ways Josiah reminds us of Timothy, and perhaps he was like Paul's young companion in having a godly home training.

Thorough-going Reforms. At the age of twenty, when the young king actually began to rule, he at once set about a complete purification of the land from idolatry. "The images and altars of Baal were everywhere destroyed; the asherahs and idols of various kinds were broken to pieces. The sun, the moon, and the signs of the zodiac had each its idolatrous symbols, but all these were now utterly removed. Human bones burned on the heathen altars rendered them forever unclean. The ox-symbols of Beth-el perished; and everywhere else, through the territory of all Israel to the far north, no relic of idolatry was suffered to remain." — *Cunningham Geikie.*

"A striking illustration of the thoroughness with which Josiah removed all traces of idolatry from the land is seen in the entire absence of such stone monuments as dolmens, cromlechs, and the like, connected with heathenism, from the west side of the Jordan, though they abound to the east of it." — *Cunningham Geikie.*

The Repair of the Temple. At the age of twenty-six, having accomplished this great work, Josiah turned to the repair of Solomon's temple, which once more had been allowed to fall into a disgraceful state. Voluntary contributions were obtained from all Judah, and from such citizens of the Northern Kingdom as were not in exile. A throng of skilled workmen was brought together on Mount Zion, with supplies of hewn stone and timber. The ancient buildings were restored to their former beauty and splendor.

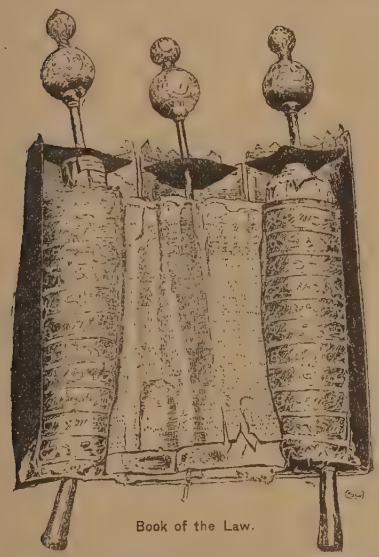
It was in the course of these operations that the events of our lesson took place.

The Discovery of the Book of the Law. 14. **And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah.** The money for the repair of

15. And Hĭl-kī'-ăh answered and said to Shā'-phăn the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hĭl-kī'-ăh delivered the book to Shā'-phăn.

the temple was evidently stored in some strong room of the temple itself. **Hilkiah the priest.** He was the high priest (v. 9). Ezra, the great leader of the return, was his great-grandson. This Hilkiah, whose name means "Jehovah is my portion," is the most famous of the eight Hilkiahs named in the Old Testament — most of them connected with the priesthood. **Found the book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses.** "Josephus makes Hilkiah find the book in the treasure-chamber of the temple which he had entered to get gold and silver for making some sacred vessels. According to Rabbinical tradition it was found hidden under a heap of stones where it had been placed to save it from being burned by King Ahaz." — *Ellicott.* "'The book of the law' is regarded by scholars as the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), which during the apostasy had been lost to public knowledge except as a tradition. Some of the older rabbis held that it was the original manuscript of Moses. Another theory is that Manasseh had ordered all copies to be destroyed, but that some faithful priest had concealed this copy until now." — *Rev. James M. Gray, D.D.* This was not such a book as we know, but was a manuscript written on skins, the strips of skins being fastened together to make a roll. The writing was in vertical columns transverse to the roll, the columns being successively brought to view as the strip was passed from one roller to the other.

The radical view, held by many modern scholars but not here advocated, is that this "book of the law" was not the Pentateuch, but was the book of Deuteronomy, which, according to this view, was not written by Moses, but was written by some unknown scribe probably during the reign of Manasseh, and by him attributed to Moses. This manuscript, these scholars think, was kept hidden till this time, when Huldah and Hilkiah thought it a good opportunity to bring it forth, and thus to move on the conscience of the king. See Driver's *Deuteronomy* in *The International Critical Commentary* and Skinner's *Kings* in *The New Century Bible.* Conservative scholars, on the other hand, urge that "the influence of Deuteronomy began to be felt from the very beginning of Israel's career in Canaan. Though the references to Deuteronomy in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are comparatively few, yet they are sufficient to show that not only the principles of Deuteronomy were known and observed, but that they were known in written form as codified statutes." — *Prof. George L. Robinson,* in *The International Standard Bible Encylcopedia,* article "Deuteronomy," which see for a full discussion of the conservative position on this important and much controverted matter.



Book of the Law.

15. **And Hilkiah answered.** Perhaps he answered an inquiry as to what he was carrying. **And said to Shaphan the scribe,** who was associated with Hilkiah in the repairing of the temple. **I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah.** "As Egyptian manuscripts which are from three to four thousand years old still exist in good condition, there can be no reason why a manuscript of Moses' time should not have been found and have been legible in Josiah's." — *Rawlinson.* **And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.** The parallel passage, 2 Kings 22 : 8–13,

16. And Shā'-phăn carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing.

says that Shaphan read the manuscript,— not necessarily all of it, but enough to perceive its character and importance.

16. **And Shaphan carried the book to the king.** Shaphan was the king's scribe or secretary, and so had ready access to Josiah. He was a man of much influence, and in later years his sons befriended Jeremiah. **And moreover brought back word to the king.** He reported concerning the task set him, the repair of the temple. **Saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing.** A model report this, whenever it can be truthfully given. Can we always give it, of our work? In addition to reporting on the progress of the repair of the temple, Shaphan (vs. 17, 18) announced the find of "a book," without stating Hilkiah's account of the nature of the book, which Shaphan may not have credited. Then the scribe read the book to the king — not necessarily all of the book, but extracts sufficient to give the message of the book to the king's conscience and its picture of the fate of a disobedient nation.

HOW MEN TO-DAY DISCOVER THE BIBLE. "Would you find your lost Bible? Look for it in the house of God . . . and slacken the speed at which you are racing after worldly goods. There is no Scripture which says, 'He that runs shall read,' but 'He that reads shall run.' . . . Take time for the patient and pious pondering of the Word of God. Many a Scripture is like a sleeping child, at which if you only gaze long and steadily enough, it will open its eyes, and you will look down into the very depths of God's wells of truth . . . And above all — Do it. If any man fails to do the duty that is clearly set before him in the Word of God, there shall presently settle a cloud upon the very word itself." — *Rev. P. S. Henson, D.D.*

Illustration. "The old picture of Martin Luther, standing before a copy of the Scriptures carefully chained to a wall in a crypt, is suggestive. The Roman Church kept the Word of God fastened by chains. Wyclif, Tyndale, Erasmus, Reuchlin, Luther, Melancthon and the Westminster divines found the old Book in the temple, rescued it from an enormous rubbish heap of traditions and decrees, and restored it to the world through the magnificent translations which they made. Then modern history began. With the beginning of the Sunday school, the church entered upon another era of Bible recovery. Societies were formed for its multiplication and distribution. Within one hundred years the British and Foreign Bible Society has issued a hundred and seventy-five million copies; and the American society has issued a million a year for seventy-five years." — *Rev. George C. Lorimer, D.D.*

III. HOW THE DISCOVERED BIBLE WAS OBEYED, vs. 19–33. JOSIAH'S GRIEF AND DISMAY. No wonder the king was awed and terrified when the Bible was read to him. No wonder he rent his robe in token of dismay. "He was strongly affected. He was profoundly humbled. For it told him of a hundred wrong things which he had done, a hundred duties which he had neglected. He who had been raging so fiercely against other people's sins discovers now that he himself needs cleansing and renewing." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.* Also he discovered what a short distance his reforms had taken him, and how far his nation still was from a God-fearing and God-obeying nation. The king felt unable in his own wisdom to know what was best to be done, so he wisely placed Hilkiah at the head of a company of five, including Shaphan and one of his sons, to seek some prophet of Jehovah, who might tell him God's will in the matter. Josiah showed his wise humility not only in recognizing his own sinfulness, but in promptly asking for help. Most rulers would have thought it more kingly to decide swiftly for themselves what should be done.

HULDAH'S PROPHECY OF PUNISHMENT AND COMFORT. Following out Josiah's command, Hilkiah and the other officers sought out Huldah the prophetess. "Jeremiah and Zephaniah were prophets contemporaneous with Josiah, but the reason Huldah was inquired of, and not they, is probably because she 'dwelt in Jerusalem' (v. 22), where the others may not have been at this time." — *Rev. James M. Gray, D.D.* The Bible names a number of women among the prophets: Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Anna, the four daughters of Philip, and this Huldah. "It is mere conjecture, but it has some probability, that Josiah had come under the influence of Huldah during his early years." — *Rev. Robert F. Horton, D.D.* "Huldah is the type of the stern, uncompromising, and conscientious woman who in every age has

29. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

30. And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah.

31. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.

---

foretold the doom of transgressors and given only scanty comfort to those who were doing their best. Such women as she may have lived among the Covenanters of Scotland and the Huguenots of France; such women may have inspired the Roundheads when they fought the Cavaliers in the days of Charles Stuart and Cromwell." —*Margaret E. Sangster.*

Huldah's prophecy "falls into two unequal divisions. The briefer portion is the denunciation of inevitable ruin upon Jerusalem for its sins. The longer portion is full of a womanly tenderness, and is a word of grace to Josiah himself, such as would encourage him to set about the reforms which were in his mind." — *Horton.* Because his heart was tender and humble, the woes of his country and city were not to fall upon him.

THE BIBLE READ TO THE PEOPLE. 29. **Then the king sent.** He sent his couriers. "The wise, religious, and unselfish conduct of the king is clearly betokened in the course he took." — *Rawlinson.* **And gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.** These were "the leading men by birth, talents, or prowess." — *Bible Commentary.*

30. **And the king went up to the house of Jehovah.** He went "up" from his palace, which was on a lower level than the temple (compare 1 Kings 10 : 5). "No place could be so suitable for the renewal of the covenant between God and his people as the house of God, where God was in a peculiar way present, and the ground was, like the ground of Horeb, holy." — *Rawlinson.* **And all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** The common people came, as well as the elders; it was a truly representative assembly, as it should have been. **And the priests, and the Levites.** Thus the religious leaders were there, as well as the secular leaders. **And all the people, both great and small.** All classes of the people were represented, rich and poor, high and low, learned and unlearned. It was a matter that concerned them all vitally. **And he read in their ears all the words of the book.** Some think that Josiah had the priests read the law, as their function was public teaching; but surely on a great occasion like this, initiated by Josiah, he himself would take the lead. Laymen are the usual readers of the Bible in the services of Jewish synagogues. **Of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah.** "The book of the covenant consisted of the ten commandments, with the accompanying ordinances, contained in Ex. 20–23, which were written by Moses in a book, formally acccepted by the Israelites, and ratified as a covenant between the Lord and his people (Ex. 24 : 3–8). Later the term is used as synonymous with the book of the law (compare 2 Kings 23 : 2 with 22 : 8, 11), and included Deuteronomy (compare Deut. 31 : 9, 26; 2 Kings 14 : 6 with Deut. 24 : 16)." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary.* The New Testament is more properly translated "The New Covenant."

BIBLE COVENANTS RENEWED AND KEPT. 31. **And the king stood in his place.** "The king's proper place in the temple seems to have been a raised standing-place in front of the entrance to the sanctuary, which made him very conspicuous." — *Rawlinson.* **And made a covenant before Jehovah.** Covenants with Jehovah on behalf of the people had been made by Abraham, Moses, Phinehas, Joshua, David, Jehoiada, Hezekiah, and one was later made by Ezra. These covenants were solemn agreements made with Jehovah by the representative of the people, and ratified by the people, promising to obey his will; and he in turn promised, through the prophets, to be their God, blessing them in all needed ways. **To walk after Jehovah.** To be God's follower, his obedient servant. "Follow me," said Christ. **And to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes.** The heap-

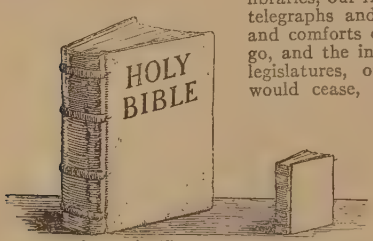
32. And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

---

ing up of these virtually synonymous words signifies all God's law and will, on all subjects. **With all his heart, and with all his soul.** Not merely formal obedience was promised, but obedience springing from the will and desire.

32. **And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it.** They expressed their allegiance to the covenant in some way, perhaps by a loud "Amen." Then we are given the heartening word that it was no mere lip-allegiance, but that they actually did what they had promised to do, and that (v. 33) they kept up this fidelity all through the days of Josiah. It was a genuine reformation, and a glorious one.

THE BIBLE IN OUR LIVES. In a powerful chapter Prof. Austin Phelps once showed what would be the result if the Bible were lost to the world. We should lose our knowledge of the true God and become as degraded as the worst savages. All our institutions of benevolence would pass away, our hospitals, asylums, charities, homes for the aged and for little children. All our public schools would go, our libraries, our free press, our post-offices, art museums, telegraphs and telephones, a thousand conveniences and comforts of our daily lives. Civil liberty would go, and the institutions of freedom; our democratic legislatures, our just courts. Honorable marriage would cease, homes would become unholy, women would become degraded, children would be freely slain, pestilence would rage unchecked, cannibalism would live again, war would be the chronic condition of society, hatred and terror and the most wretched poverty and misery would be the lot of every human being. That is only a feeble picture of what the continued influence of the Bible means to mankind.



There are 1,000,000 copies of Bibles sold a year against 100,000 copies of any most widely sold secular book.

And what the loss of the Bible would mean to the world, that, in all the most hopeless and eternal aspects of the matter, is the result of the loss of the Bible in individual lives.

Can we do less than honor the Book of books, cherish it, and seek ever to know it better and obey it more perfectly?

LESSON IX (22). — May 28.

JEREMIAH SPEAKS BOLDLY FOR GOD. — Jeremiah 26.

PRINT vs. 8–16.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah.* — JER. 26 : 13.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 103 : 13–22.
Reference Material: 2 Sam. 12 : 1–14; 1 Kings 21 : 17–24; Jer. 7 : 1–15; Amos 6 : 1–8.
Primary Topic: THE STORY OF A BRAVE PROPHET.
Memory Verse: Obey the voice of Jehovah. Jer. 26 : 13.
Junior Topic: A BRAVE PROPHET'S MESSAGE.
Memory Verse: Jer. 26 : 13.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: JEREMIAH SPEAKS BOLDLY FOR GOD.
Topic for Young People and Adults: WHEN AND HOW SHOULD WRONG BE REBUKED?

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in the story of the mob and of Jeremiah's bravery. Make a plan of the temple, its outer court, and the palace next to it. Make dots on the plan to represent the characters — a blue dot for Jeremiah, red dots for the mob, green dots for the princes. The children have not much rebuking to do, but they all have chances to speak bravely for God and the right, as Jeremiah did.

The Older Classes will make this lesson a study in reform — the reform of individuals and of society. After a full explanation of the situation, you may have two papers, one naming some present-day evils that should be rebuked, and the other describing the way in which the rebuke should be given. There are to be other lessons on Jeremiah, but you will take up in this lesson the early days of the prophet and the political condition of his nation at the time.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jehoiakim came to the throne (Beecher) B. C. 607, and the event of our lesson took place near the beginning of his reign.

Place. — Solomon's temple, in Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Jeremiah's education and circumstances.
Jeremiah's style and writings.
Jeremiah compared with Isaiah.
Jeremiah's defence compared with Christ's, Stephen's, and Paul's.
The relations between Judah and the neighboring nations during Jehoiakim's reign.
Origin and growth of the Sanhedrin.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Jeremiah's Brave Words and Their Result.

I. JEREMIAH REBUKES EVIL, vs. 1–7.
   Who Jeremiah was.
   The prophet's call.
   The prophet's bold warning.

II. JEREMIAH IN PERIL OF HIS LIFE, vs. 8–11.
   Angry opposition.
   The arrest.
   The trial and charge.

III. JEREMIAH SAVED TO CONTINUE HIS WORK, vs. 12–24.
   Jeremiah's courageous defence.
   The verdict.
   The example of Micah.
   The fate of Uriah.
   The rebuke of wrong to-day.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Jeremiah by Streane (*Cambridge Bible*), Peake (*New Century Bible*), Cheyne (*Pulpit Commentary*), Kirkpatrick (*International Critical Commentary*), Bennett (*Expositor's Bible*), Parker (*People's Bible*) Maclaren (*Expositions*), Butler (*Bible Work*), Driver, Ellicott, etc. Chapters on Jeremiah in *Men of the Old Testament* (by Adeney), Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible*, Whyte's *Bible Characters*, Amos R. Wells's *Bible Miniatures*, Geikie's *Old Testament Characters* and *Landmarks of Old Testament History*, Fairweather's *Pre-exilic Prophets*. Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*. Francis E. Clark's *Old Lanterns for Present Paths* is on Jeremiah. F. B. Meyer, *Jeremiah, Priest and Prophet*. Cheyne's *Jeremiah, His Life and Times* in *Men of the Bible* series. Chapters in Godet's *Biblical Studies* and Mozley's *Occasional Sermons*.

I. JEREMIAH REBUKES EVIL, vs. 1–7. *Jeremiah's name* is of uncertain meaning: "appointed of Jehovah," "Jehovah throws," or "overthrows," or "Jehovah shall exalt."

His father was Hilkiah, probably the high-priest Hilkiah who in the reign of Josiah found the book of the law in the temple. If this was the case, we may easily know the education of Jeremiah, and the godly influences that made of him a great prophet. Further, his uncle was Shallum, the husband of Huldah the prophetess.

Jeremiah was a priest, whose duty was to officiate regularly in the temple, offering sacrifices, and performing the other sacred rites. "There is nothing, however, to indicate that he ever performed priestly functions. Still, Jeremiah had a true priestly heart. He was a priest not merely by birth, but by the grace of God." — *Cheyne*. He had received God's command not to marry, and therefore he had no family, and was free to devote all his time and strength to his work as a prophet.

Jeremiah's home was at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, a tiny territory only twenty-six miles long and twelve broad. It is now called Anata, and is on a broad ridge only one and one-quarter hours' journey north-northeast from Jerusalem. "The cultivation of the priests survives in tilled fields of grain with figs and olives. There are the remains of walls and strong foundations, and the quarries still supply Jerusalem with building stone." — *Cambridge Bible*.

Jeremiah's call came to him when he was a very young man, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, the year after the young king began his work of reformation. In some way God impressed upon him his duty to become a public preacher of religion, a prophet. "I know not how to speak," Jeremiah objected, "for I am a child" (Jer. 1 : 6). "Be not afraid," the Lord answered, "for I am with thee. I

have put my words in thy mouth." Thus encouraged, Jeremiah went forth to become one of the most powerful of all earth's preachers.

Illustration. "Moses received the call of God in the same way; and so far did he carry his refusal as to arouse the anger of Jehovah. When John Knox was called to be a preacher by the acclamation of his fellow-prisoners in the church of St. Andrews, he was so overwhelmed that, after an ineffectual attempt to address the congregation, he burst into tears, rushed out, and shut himself up in his chamber, persuaded that he could never appear in the pulpit again." — *Hastings.*

Jeremiah's career extended over forty-one years, through the last eighteen years of Josiah's reign and the reigns of the four kings following, to the destruction of Jerusalem. During all this time Jeremiah was obliged by his clear insight into God's will and into the progress of history to stand in opposition to the men of power and influence in the nation. Therefore he was constantly persecuted, and "his ministry was a lifelong martyrdom." He ended his life an exile in Egypt, where tradition has it that he was stoned to death.

Jeremiah's writings are among the most eloquent and powerful in the Bible. He is often called "the weeping prophet," but he is rather the prophet of stern warnings. His book is a vivid picture of the stirring times in which he lived. The outline of the book is as follows: Chapter 1, introduction; chapters 2–20 may be the prophecies written by Baruch after Jehoiakim had burned the first roll; 21–24, brief notes of warning; 25–28, prophecies of the fall of Jerusalem; 29–31, relating to the exile in Babylonia; 32–45, concerning the history of the two years before the fall of Jerusalem; 46–51, prophecies against foreign nations, especially Babylon; 52, the conclusion, relating to the fall of Jerusalem, which some think was written by Ezra.

The book is full of the most brilliant, forcible writing. Lacking the splendid scope and Shakespearean universality of Isaiah's powers, Jeremiah is not inferior even to him in vigor. He delights in parable, in parables personally and dramatically presented. "Jeremiah is the most human of the prophets. He anticipates Christianity more clearly than any other Old Testament prophet. He was emphatically the one Christian before Christ." — *Principal Walter F. Adeney, D.D.* "Jeremiah was far and away the most spiritually-minded of all the prophets." — *Rev. Alexander Whyte, D.D.* It is Jeremiah and not Isaiah that is regarded by the Jews as their great national prophet. When Christ came some said that he was Jeremiah risen from the dead.

King Jehoiakim ("Jehovah doth establish"), son of Josiah, came to the throne under tragic circumstances. Josiah had been slain fighting against Pharaoh-necho at Megiddo, going to battle as an ally of Assyria. The people placed Jehoahaz, the third son of Josiah, on the throne, but the victorious Egyptians carried him off to Egypt and put in his place his older brother, Jehoiakim, who had to pay heavy tribute to Egypt, to obtain which he collected burdensome taxes. Moreover, he refused to follow his father's footsteps, but departed from the true religion and went over to idolatry.

Ruins at Shiloh.

Under these conditions, so distressing to his loyal heart, Jeremiah could not keep still. Standing in the outer court of the temple where a crowd would soon gather around him, he denounced the city and nation for their faithlessness, and declared solemnly that unless they repented, harkened to God's prophets and obeyed God's law, the

8. And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shī'-lōh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah.

10. And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's *house*.

---

temple would become a ruin like Shiloh, the ancient religious capital of the nation, and the city of Jerusalem would become accursed in the sight of all nations. Shiloh, where ark and tabernacle were placed, was a considerable town in the heart of the land, in Ephraim; but it fell into shameful idolatry, was captured by the Philistines, and from that day was a place of utter insignificance. This prophecy, horrible and treasonable in the ears of the Jews, was heard by the priests and the false prophets and by all the people. It could not be forgotten, and it was not forgiven.

II. JEREMIAH IN PERIL OF HIS LIFE, vs. 8–11. "In respect for the memory of the Shiloh temple and horror at its end, Jeremiah and his fanatical hearers were agreed." But in their self-righteousness the Jews of Jeremiah's day never thought that they could possibly be sinners like the men of Shiloh. They "surrounded the prophet with angry words. Like St. Stephen's audience long afterwards, 'they were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth' (Acts 7 : 54). Narrowly indeed did he escape St. Stephen's fate." — *Cheyne.*

8. **And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking.** Doubtless the brief report we have in verses 3–6 gives only a most condensed summary of an extended and fiery oration. **All that Jehovah had commanded him to speak.** Jeremiah could not have spoken thus boldly, for he was naturally of a timid and shrinking nature, if he had not been upheld constantly by the knowledge that he was acting under God's orders and so had the Almighty back of him. **Unto all the people.** The prophet did not single out any class as guiltless, but boldly included them all in his sweeping condemnation, as was deserved, and so had them all as his foes. **That the priests and the prophets and all the people.** These were false priests and false prophets. "Jeremiah had to separate himself from both the orders to which he belonged, in the one case by birth, in the other by a special vocation. His bitterest foes were found among those who claimed to speak as he did, in the name of the Lord, but who tuned their voices according to the time, and prophesied deceits." — *Ellicott.* **Laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.** In spite of themselves, they reverenced the prophet, and so let him complete his address before laying hands on him. Perhaps, as Paul in his address to the mob from the Castle stairs, not far from this very spot, reserved mention of the hated Gentiles to the very last (Acts 22 : 21, 22), so Jeremiah's prophecy of the destruction of the temple and the city was not made till the close of his address. "A prophet speaking without God's command was to be put to death (Deut. 18 : 20). This was the charge against Jeremiah, and the alleged proof was that God could not permit such a calamity as he had prophesied to fall on Jerusalem." — *Dummelow.* Jeremiah's words would also appear blasphemy, which likewise was punishable by death.

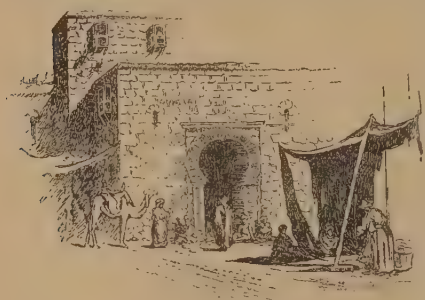
9. **Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah?** It would have been bad enough if Jeremiah had prophesied on his own authority, but to claim Jehovah's authority for saying that Jehovah's own house and city would be overthrown — that they regarded as taking God's name in vain! **And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah.** The Hebrew verb signifies, "constituted themselves into a legal assembly." — *Pulpit Commentary.* They crowded about the prophet to prevent his escape, perhaps to maltreat him.

10. **And when the princes of Judah heard these things.** "Princes" includes the members of the royal family, who acted as judges, together with the "elders" or heads of families. This assembly of judges was the predecessor of the Sanhedrin of Christ's time. The princes had not heard Jeremiah's Shiloh prophecy, and would be more cool and impartial than the raging crowd. **They came up from the king's**

11. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

house unto the house of Jehovah. The king's palace was immediately south of the temple, inclosed by the same general inclosure. Cheyne thinks it was probably the highest building in the city, and that "up" is used here because of the spiritual eminence of the temple. Others believe that the temple actually stood on higher ground than the palace. **And they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house.** This was probably the "upper gate" or entrance of the temple inclosure which King Jotham had built not many years before (2 Kings 15:35). Judges sat customarily in such entrances to hold their courts because of the ease of summoning witnesses, and that the proceedings might be in the eye of the public. "Entry" means the door of the gate.



A City Gate.

11. **Then spake the priests and the prophets.** They acted as plaintiff and prosecuting attorney both. **Unto the princes and to all the people.** Verse 8 says that "all the people" had laid hold on Jeremiah, but the judgment of mobs is proverbially fickle; the prophets and priests were the ringleaders against Jeremiah and had stirred up the mob; now they must address the people and keep their anger alive. **Saying, This man is worthy of death.** "Literally, 'A sentence of death belongs to this man.'" — *Cheyne.* **For he hath prophesied against this city.** Near this very place Stephen was arraigned, and essentially the same charge was brought against him; see Acts 6:11–14. Near here also our Lord was brought before the Sanhedrin charged with threatening to destroy the temple. **As ye have heard with your ears.** This is spoken to the people and not the princes, since the latter had not been present while Jeremiah was speaking. Doubtless the mob responded with shouts: "Yes, we have!" It was the same kind of mob that shouted "Crucify him! Crucify him!" near that spot seven centuries later.

III. JEREMIAH SAVED TO CONTINUE HIS WORK, vs. 12–24. "In a few noble and simple words Jeremiah makes his defence. It is a great scene which here passes before us, in which the prophet's bearing is wholly worthy of himself, and in which we do well to observe his unshaken conviction that his message had been entrusted to him by God himself." — *Prof. A. S. Peake, D.D.*

12. **Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people.** "Jeremiah is the bravest of prophets, for not only does he face the greatest dangers, he does this with a keen sense of what it all means. Such courage is infinitely more real than the bravery of a muscular Samson or a fanatical Saladin. An experienced general being asked who was the bravest man he knew, named a young officer who had gone into battle trembling with fear, but who notwithstanding had done his duty in the thick of the fight." — *Principal Adeney.* **Saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city.** "In arraigning me," Jeremiah said in effect, "you are arraigning God, for I am his messenger, speaking his words. Beware!" The same warning was given by a member of this same court, the Sanhedrin, when Christ's apostles were charged with unlawful teaching. Then arose Gamaliel and bade them take heed lest they should prove to be fighting against God (Acts 5:27–42). **All the words that ye have heard.** Including the comparison with Shiloh which most aroused their wrath.

13. Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14. But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes.

15. Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God.

---

13. **Now therefore amend your ways and your doings.** "The thought is the same as that of Deut. 7 : 12–15, one of the many passages of that book which influenced the language of Jeremiah. 'Your ways and your doings' is a favorite combination with Jeremiah (compare Jer. 4 : 18; 7 : 3, 5; 18 : 11; 35 : 15), and in a less degree with Ezekiel (Ezek. 14 : 22, 23; 20 : 43; 36 : 17); see also Zech. 1 : 4, 6. *Ways* will mean rather the settled habits, *doings* the separate acts which go to form them." — *Cambridge Bible.* **And obey the voice of Jehovah your God.** "God as the Righteous One — that is the dominant idea of Jeremiah's ministry. To bow beneath the hand of God when he chastises, and then to wait upon him as alone having power to absolve the nation on their repentance — this, indeed, was the very message which Israel needed at the time when Jeremiah was given to them as their counsellor and their guide." — *Godet.* **And Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.** "Repent," when used of God, does not of course mean to turn from sin. "The usual meaning of the Hebrew verb here translated is to change one's mind or purpose out of pity for those whom one's actions have affected, or because the results of an action have not fulfilled expectation. In this sense repentance is attributed not only to man, but to God (Gen. 6 : 6; Ex. 32 : 14)." — *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.*

14. **But as for me.** If Jeremiah had taken thought for himself, he would never have tried to drive the people from their sins and back to God. But Jeremiah never took thought for himself, he took thought for God. "Jeremiah put himself in the place of God; his was the sympathy of the human with the divine. He tries to imagine what he himself would feel if he were God Almighty beholding the state of His creatures." — *George Matheson.* **Behold, I am in your hand.** Jeremiah calmly knew also that he was in God's hand. The mob might do what it chose with his body, but they could not touch the deathless part of him.

15. **Only know ye for certain.** This is like Christ's "Verily, verily," used when he was especially in earnest. **That, if ye put me to death.** Jeremiah faced that possibility without a tremor. He knew well that

> "'Tis not the whole of life to live
> Nor all of death to die."
> — *James Montgomery.*

Ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves. "The blood of the slain would cry for vengeance against his murderers, who would come to an untimely end, their souls (see verse 19) being sent down to lead a miserable life in Sheol or Hades." — *Pulpit Commentary.* Compare Gen. 4 : 10. "Those that persecute God's ministers, hurt not them so much as themselves." — *Matthew Henry.* **And upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof.** The Bible everywhere teaches the great truth that cities and nations suffer for the misdeads of their rulers. That has always been true, and the more democratic the government, the more just is it that the people should pay the penalty when the officers whom they select do wrong. **For of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you.** This is the great truth in Jeremiah's experience and belief, and he does not hesitate to repeat it.

16. **Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets.** The people seem to have been won over by Jeremiah's confident speech. **This man is not worthy of death.** "Thus does God hide his faithful servants in the hollow

of his hand. No weapon that is formed against them prospers. They are hidden in the secret of his pavilion from the strife of tongues." — *F. B. Meyer.* **For he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God.** Not merely that Jeremiah had claimed Jehovah as the source of his message, but that he had evidently spoken in the spirit and power of Jehovah ; for that is what "in the name" means here and elsewhere.

THE EXAMPLE OF MICAH. "It has been conjectured that as the princes represented the king in judgment, so the elders represented the people, adding their assent to the previously expressed decision." —*Rev. A. W. Streane.* They brought up the case of Micah, one of the Minor Prophets who prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This Micah (as we are also told in Mic. 3 : 12) uttered regarding Jerusalem words as ill-omened as Jeremiah's, but King Hezekiah and Judah did not put him to death because of that. Rather did Hezekiah pray that God would avert the threatened disaster, and God answered Hezekiah's prayer by preserving the king and his nation. This, the elders say, is the right way to meet Jeremiah's warning.

THE FATE OF URIAH. Jeremiah, writing this account at a later time, introduced here the contrasted experience of an unknown prophet named Uriah, who followed the example of Jeremiah in foretelling the evil that would befall Jerusalem and Judah. In his case, however, King Jehoiakim sought to have him executed. Uriah fled to Egypt, but was pursued, brought back, and slain at the king's orders. Jeremiah seems to have been in danger at the same time (doubtless he was often in peril of his life), but was saved by the intervention of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, Shaphan being one of the five men whom Josiah sent to consult Huldah. Thus Jeremiah felt that God was surely on his side, watching over his life as long as he should be true to God.

Illustration. "Ahikam stood by Jeremiah as John of Gaunt stood by Wyclif, and the Protestant princes by Luther, and the magistrates of Geneva by Calvin." — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.*

WHEN AND HOW SHOULD WRONG BE REBUKED? We must not wait for rebuking to become popular before we raise our voice against evil. "Often the more open and daring men are in wickedness the more they are offended at the least allusion to it on the part of others. They will thrust their misdeeds before other people's eyes, but they think their doing this is the very reason why they should not be thrust before their own. Ahab was perfectly open in his idolatrous wickedness, and yet because Elijah simply told him the fact, he said to him, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?'" — *Canon J. B. Mozley, D.D.*

"Jeremiah was on the unpopular side all his life. Nor was it especially to his credit that he was on the unpopular side. It was to his credit that he dared to be on the right side ; but the right side is sometimes, nay, often, I am glad to believe, the popular side ; and the reformer has the grateful task of leading on the victory amid the plaudits of the people. Not so with Jeremiah. He was always in opposition to the people, because the people of his day were always in opposition to God." — *Rev. Francis E. Clark, D.D.*

The time to rebuke a wrong is as soon as it is recognized as a wrong. The longer we postpone the rebuke, the more firmly will the wrong be established, and the harder will it be to speak and act against it. Paul (2 Tim. 4 : 2) bade Timothy to be "urgent in season, out of season," with his reproof, rebuke, and exhortation.

Christ is the best model for us in the rebuke of wrong. He was very outspoken. "Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!" he thundered ; but he made it perfectly plain that he was opposed to them only while they practised their hyprocrisy. How tender he was with repentant sinners, with Zacchæus, with Matthew the publican, with the woman that was a sinner, with Peter, with Paul!

Nothing personal must enter our rebuke of wrongdoers. We must not fight for our offended dignity. We must make it plain, however they abuse us, that our only care is for their reformation, for their well-being and for the honor of God. Jeremiah is a good model here. "Do with me as you will," he said.

Our rebukes, like Jeremiah's, must contain the element of warning. Do not let wrongdoers forget the awful consequences of sin. If a blind man stood on the edge of a precipice, would you not run to pull him back?

We must make no compromise with evil. Our rebuke must continue as long as the evil continues, and it must not be a half-rebuke for what others consider a half-evil. There are no half-evils.

Above all, we must hold out the promise of God's forgiveness, as Jeremiah did. If sinners turn from their sins, he will turn toward them with love and with glad restoration. "Oh, the freedom with which the gates of the divine forgiveness are thrown open! The Bible trembles and burns and overruns with offers!" — *Phillips Brooks.*

Illustration. "When the black city river runs into the sea it is swallowed up in the crystal depths, utterly lost, nothing is seen in the ocean but purest tints, nothing heard but infinite music; when the city smoke ascends into the sky it is forthwith lost in the eternal blue of the firmament; so the love of God, so the merit of Christ, are wider than the sea, higher than the sky, and our sins are blotted out as a cloud, our guilt and shame swallowed up in the infinite depths to be remembered against us no more forever." — *Rev. W. L. Watkinson, D.D.*

LESSON X (23). — June 4.

JEHOIAKIM TRIES TO DESTROY GOD'S WORD. — Jeremiah 36.

PRINT vs. 4–8, 20–24, 32.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The word of our God shall stand forever.* — ISA. 40 : 8.

Devotional Reading: Isa. 40 : 1–8.
Reference Material: Isa. 55 : 8–11; Matt. 5 : 17–19.
Primary Topic: THE BURNING OF A GOOD BOOK.
Memory Verse: Thy law do I love. Ps. 119 : 113.
Junior Topic: JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE PROPHET'S BOOK.
Memory Verses: Prov. 3 : 1, 2.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: A KING WHO SCORNED GOD'S WORD.
Topic for Young People and Adults: HOW TO MEET THE FORCES ANTAGONISTIC TO GOD'S WORD.

Or,

WHITSUNDAY LESSON. — JOHN 16 : 1–15.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.* — JOHN 16 : 7.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in an object lesson which may be arranged in this way. Place before the class a dark, shallow bowl shaped like an ancient brazier. Make from paper a little model of a Bible "roll," with its rollers, and with columns of imitation Hebrew script. As the story progresses you may produce a knife and cut up the roll, tossing the pieces into the bowl, and finally touching a match to them and burning them up. Then talk about the ways in which we treat our Bibles badly, by neglecting them, forgetting them, making jokes on Bible subjects, not obeying the Bible commandments, etc. Write each of these on a slip of paper as you talk about it, and put it in the brazier. End by burning these up also. This is the right kind of fire.

The Older Classes, after discussing the lesson facts, will go on to study the ways in which men to-day seek to destroy God's word, and how each of these attempts may be met. For this part of the lesson arrange the students in pairs. One, for example, will show how modern destructive criticism seeks to destroy the Bible, and his partner will show how this destructive criticism may be met. In the same way you will discuss disbelief in the supernatural, denial of inspiration, denial of the deity of Christ, denial of prophecy, and denial of the authenticity of the Bible. Leave plenty of time for questions and answers.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jehoiakim, according to Professor Beecher, came to the throne B. C. 607. The date of our lesson is the fourth year of his reign, or B. C. 604.

Place. — Solomon's temple in Jerusalem and the king's palace in the same general enclosure.

THE ROUND TABLE.
FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The character of Jehoiakim.
How ancient books were written.
Jeremiah's purpose in his prophecies.
The dangers through which the Bible has passed.
How the Bible has proved its divine origin.
How we can exalt the Bible in modern life.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: God's Indestructible Word.

I. THE BOOK OF WARNING, vs. 1–8.
   Jeremiah shut up.
   A prophet by proxy.
   The purpose of God's Word.

II. THE BOOK IN THE FIRE, vs. 9–25.
   God's Word proclaimed.
   God's Word scorned.
   Modern enemies of God's Word.

III. THE BOOK TRIUMPHANT, vs. 26–32.
   The prophet preserved.
   The book re-written and enlarged.
   How to conquer the enemies of God's Word.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

MacArthur's *Quick Truths in Quaint Texts, Vol. I.* Cox's *Expositions, Vol. II.* Greenhough's *Half Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery.* Talmage's *Sermons, Vol. I.* Burrell's *Hints and Helps.* Bishop of Fredericton's *Sermons.* Payson's *Works, Vol. III.* Orr's *The Bible under Trial.* Johnston's *Bible Criticism and the Average Man.* Anderson's *The Bible and Modern Criticism.* Gladstone's *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture.* Mears's *The Deathless Book.* On the charms of the Bible, books by Work, Young, and Huntington. On ancient bookmaking, Sinks's *The Reign of the Manuscript.*

4. Then Jeremiah called Bā'-rŭch the son of Né-rī-'āh; and Bā'-rŭch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of Jehovah, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.

I. THE BOOK OF WARNING, vs. 1–8. Our last lesson showed us the peril in which Jeremiah was placed because of his stern and unpopular teachings. In Jerusalem, fanatical and headstrong, he was really in danger of his life if he dared to oppose the prejudice of the people or of the priests and the secular leaders. Courage was one of Jeremiah's marked characteristics, but he was not foolhardy, nor did he believe it right to risk his life if he could gain his ends by other means. Our lesson shows what means he adopted to bring truth home to people and king.

The episode we studied last week took place in the first year of the reign of Jehoiakim of Judah, son of Josiah. The event we are now to study occurred in Jehoiakim's fourth year, when the evil tendencies of that monarch's reign had become manifest, and when Jeremiah was in disfavor with the king and the priests.

At this time the prophet was inspired by Jehovah to cease oral teaching for the time, and commit to writing all of his public utterances from the beginning of his career.

Illustration. "The restriction of his active ministry was to bear rich fruit, like Paul's imprisonment, and Athanasius' exile, and Luther's sojourn in the Wartburg. The roll of the book could speak even if he were put to death. Perhaps the closest modern parallel is that of the speaker who is howled down at a public meeting and hands his manuscript to the reporters." — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.*

4. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah. He has already been introduced in the book as Jeremiah's attendant (Jer. 32 : 11, 12). He was a scribe (verse 32) "probably a secretary by profession, and a faithful adherent of the prophet. He seems to have been of high standing socially. He was a grandson of Maaseiah, who is described in 2 Chron. 34 : 8 as the governor of the city, and the brother of Seraiah, who, according to Jer. 51 : 59, held an official position (what position is not clear), and went to Babylon on a mission in the reign of Zedekiah." — *Prof. A. S. Peake, D.D.* **And Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah.** The scribe took down Jeremiah's prophecies from dictation. The prophet may have had written memoranda before him, but probably he relied entirely upon his memory to reproduce his former addresses. Before the invention of printing, and even now where the constant use of printed books and papers and written note-books has not stunted this power, the human memory has a prodigious range and wonderful accuracy. Entire Iliads were held in the minds of strolling minstrels, and long collections of tales like the "One Thousand and One Arabian Nights" were repeated to delighted audiences without a scrap of notes. **All the words of Jehovah, which he had spoken unto him.** Jeremiah had been preaching to the people for twenty-three years; it was a large body of teaching which was thus committed to writing. This feat of dictation was not unlike, in splendor of mental achievement, Paul's dictation of his incomparable epistles. **Upon a roll of a book.** "The substance on which Baruch wrote was parchment. Several skins were stitched together and attached to a roller of wood at one or both ends.

5. And Jeremiah commanded Bā'-rūch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of Jehovah:

6. Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of Jehovah in the ears of the people in Jehovah's house upon the fast-day; and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.

7. It may be they will present their supplication before Jehovah, and will return every one from his evil way; for great is the anger and the wrath that Jehovah hath pronounced against this people.

8. And Bā'-rūch the son of Nê-rī'-āh did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of Jehovah in Jehovah's house.

The writing was arranged in columns parallel to the rollers, so that as the parchment was gradually unrolled from one end to the other, the successive columns could be read. Our word volume (that which is *rolled up*) points by its derivation to this older form of book." — *Cambridge Bible.*

5. **And Jeremiah commanded Baruch.** Baruch was evidently in Jeremiah's employ, so that the prophet gave an order rather than a mere request. **Saying, I am shut up.** Some have thought that this means some such imprisonment as the prophet later experienced, but this is not to be accepted because verse 19 shows that Jeremiah was free to move about. It is more likely that the prophet was excluded from the temple because the temple authorities were offended by the proceeding described in Jer. 20 : 1 — 21 : 6, or by some similar happening. **I cannot go into the house of Jehovah.** It was there that Jeremiah would find the largest audience, and the place was most suitable for an appeal to the consciences of the people.

6. **Therefore go thou, and read . . . . . in Jehovah's house upon the fast-day.** A day of fasting was chosen because the fasting would fix the people's minds upon such religious themes as Jeremiah wished to treat, and also because the ceremonies in the temple would bring together in the temple large numbers not only from Jerusalem but also from the other cities and towns of Judah. It is stimulating to see that Jeremiah did not do as so many would have done, tamely yield to the excuse that was so ready to his hand and give up prophesying, at least for the time. No ; if he could not go to the temple, he could and he would send his message by some one else. It is in this spirit that a Christian Endeavorer, if he cannot attend the monthly consecration meeting of the society, promises in his pledge to send a message by some one else. **And also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah.** "This addition implies that Baruch was, if opportunity offered, to read the words of the prophecy on other occasions and to other gatherings of the people." — *Ellicott.* **That come out of their cities,** visiting Jerusalem for the fast-day.

7. **It may be they will present their supplication before Jehovah.** The literal rendering is, "their supplication will fall before Jehovah." the prayer being put in place of those that are praying. "If their supplication falls before Jehovah, he will be constrained to take notice of it." — *New Century Bible.* **And will return every one from his evil way.** "'Returning,' that is, repentance, is necessary because their 'evil ways' have provoked Jehovah to 'great anger and fury'; but is only possible by the divine help (compare Acts 5 : 31, 'To *give* repentance unto Israel'). Hence prayer is the first duty." — *Prof. T. K. Cheyne.* **For great is the anger and the wrath that Jehovah hath pronounced against this people.** God is love, but God is also justice. God loves us so much that he cannot be heedless of our sins. It is a weak and thoughtless human parent that never punishes his child when he does wrong. God shows his love as truly by his wrath as by his mercy.

8. **And Baruch . . . did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him.** The following verses tell in detail just how he carried out Jeremiah's orders. Baruch is one of the large number of faithful souls about whom the Bible tells us, who, in subordinate places, have humbly and faithfully done their part and have made the great careers of their leaders possible. Thus Aaron and Hur supported Moses. Thus Paul was aided by Luke, Silas, Timothy, Titus, and many others. Such men among the twelve disciples were James the son of Alphæus, Bartholomew, Thaddæus, and

20. And they went in to the king into the court ; but they had laid up the roll in the chamber of Ē-lĭsh'-ă-mà the scribe; and they told all the words in the ears of the king.

21. So the king sent Jĕ-hū'-dī to fetch the roll; and he took it out of the chamber of Ē-lĭsh'-a-mà the scribe. And Jĕ-h'ū-dī read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king.

Simon the Cananæan. Only eternity can reveal how much the world of action and of progress owes to its quiet, steady Baruchs.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S WORD. Ruskin was once asked to describe the Bible in a sentence, and replied that it is the one book to which any thoughtful man may go with any honest question of life or destiny and find the answer of God by patient searching.

Illustration. "'The entrance of thy words giveth light' (Ps. 119 : 130). It is not the entrance of these words into our lives that giveth light, but our entrance into them that giveth light. The figure is not that of a candle borne into a darkened room, which scatters the darkness for those who are within. It is rather the figure of men who have been sitting in the darkened room who now rise up and make their way out where the sun is shining. Entering into its rays, they find light." — *Prof. Cleland B. McAfee, D.D.*

II. THE BOOK IN THE FIRE, vs. 9–25. "The trumpet is blown in Zion (Joel 2 : 1), and at the first note the crowds hasten to the temple. Soon sacrificial smoke ascends ; suppliant processions go round the altar ; penitential psalms are chanted, and those piercing cries of which Jewish throats are capable resound through the temple courts. Baruch, too, the brave and faithful Baruch, betakes himself to God's house ; or, rather, for how should he win the attention of this busy multitude ? — to one of the many chambers of different sizes attached to the temple. A fellow scribe, whose duties bring him into constant relations to the king, and who is the brother of Jeremiah's patron Ahikam, offers him hospitality. Probably he is acquainted with Baruch, who himself has a family connection with the court, being the brother of one high functionary (Jer. 51 : 59) and the grandson of another (2 Chron. 34 : 8). In this large room Baruch recites one or more prophecies to many of the people, declaring that 'this house shall become like Shiloh' and that 'Nebuchadnezzar shall destroy this land and all the countries round about' (Jer. 26 : 6 ; 25 : 9 ; compare 36 : 29), but doubtless adding a strong appeal to them to 'return every man from his evil way that I (Jehovah) may forgive their iniquity' (Jer. 36 : 3). Not a very attractive sermon for those who think to move Jehovah by forms and ceremonies! The next to hear it, by their own request, are the princes in their council chamber. They, too, are startled at its boldness. They know Jeremiah, but a prediction quite so definite as this they have not yet heard from him. They also know Jehoiakim, and how passionately he resents the least infringement of his royal rights. As politicians, too, perhaps they partly sympathize with him, even though, as fellow-converts of Josiah, the oldest and gravest of them revere Josiah's prophet. 'They turn trembling one to another, and say unto Baruch, We have to tell the king of all these words' (verse 16)." — *Cheyne.*

20. **And they went in to the king into the court.** "The inner quadrangle of the palace, in which the royal residence was actually situated." — *Speaker's Commentary.* **But they had laid up the roll.** They hoped the king would be satisfied with their oral report and would not ask for the roll. Evidently, though they felt obliged to report the matter, they were friends of Jeremiah and Baruch, and wished to shield them as much as possible. **In the chamber of Elishama the scribe.** "In every side of the temple except the east there were chambers arranged in three stories. We are not told how thick the walls of these chambers were, how many in number the chambers were, nor is anything said about their arrangement."— *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.* **And they told all the words in the ears of the king.** The substance of the prophecies, what they could remember of them. Men of those days could make a far better report of a sermon than the average man of to-day!

21. **So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll.** Jehudi was the courtier whom the princes had sent to Baruch, to command him to read Jeremiah's prophecies before them. He was probably an Ethiopian, as he was descended from Cushi, which means "Ethiopian." **And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king.** The reader's voice must have faltered at many of the bold utterances. **And in the ears of all the princes**

22. Now the king was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month: and *there was a fire in* the brazier burning before him.

23. And it came to pass, when Jê-hū'-dī had read three or four leaves, that *the king* cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier.

24. And they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words

---

that stood beside the king. Literally, "above the king," as the courtiers were standing and the king was sitting.

22. **Now the king was sitting in the winter-house.** Dr. Thomson says that the more airy part of a house in Palestine is called the summer-house, and the more sheltered room is called the winter-house. Winter, the rainy season in Palestine, can be bitterly cold. See Amos 3 : 15. **In the ninth month.** The Hebrew year began in March or April with the new moon, and therefore the ninth month was November-December. The months had names, but the Bible usually refers to them by number. **And there was a fire in the brazier burning before him.** "Hearths are entirely unknown in the East, but on the middle of the floor was a brazier containing burning charcoal." — *Speaker's Commentary.* Such a vessel is still used in the East in cold weather.

23. **And it came to pass when Jehudi had read three or four leaves.** That was as much as the king could endure without action. By "leaves" is meant the vertical columns of the writing on the roll. **That the king cut it with the penknife.** Literally, "with the scribe's knife," a knife used by the scribes to cut pens from reeds, and to erase any errors in their writing. Parchment is very tough, and cannot be torn by the hand like our paper. "There is an old saying that a child and a fool should never be trusted with a penknife, for each of them will employ it either in whittling away things of value or in injuring themselves." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.* **And cast it into the fire that was in the brazier.** "The proud king rises — he steps forward — three high officers in vain attempt to check him — he snatches the scroll from the reader's hands — he cuts it, with a cruel kind of pleasure, into piece after piece, and throws it into the fire. Then he watches the curling fragments." — *Cheyne.* **Until all the roll was consumed.** The king implied that the author of the roll deserved no less punishment than the roll. "Perhaps we can hardly find in the whole Bible a more awful instance of hardened impiety. Here is a man who with all the advice and prayers and actions of his father to guide him, after a day of public and solemn humiliation for his own sins and the sins of the nation, not only shows that he has no contrition, but flies in the face of God, rends and tramples under foot the message of the Almighty, and seeks to slay the messengers of the divine threatening." — *Bishop of Fredericton.*

Jehoiakim Burns the Prophet's Book.

Illustration. "You expect to go on an excursion, and read in the paper, 'Showers at intervals all the morning.' Are you so silly as to think destroying that paper will avert those showers? The doctrines of God's word are unwelcome to some men; therefore these doctrines are untrue." — *Rev. R. S. MacArthur, D.D.*

24. **And they were not afraid.** How different the feelings of the pious king Josiah when he heard the word of God (2 Kings 22 : 11), and even Ahab humbled himself before the rebuke and stern warning of Elijah (1 Kings 21 : 27).

Illustration. "In his deep affliction Walter Scott wrote in his diary: 'What! shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?' If that had been Jehoiakim's spirit, he would have found that God's sternness was a sign in his favor. For Jeremiah spoke truly for God when he said, 'I am merciful, and I will not keep mine anger forever.'" — *Rev. Joseph Dunn Burrell.*

Nor rent their garments, in token of grief and repentance, as Josiah had done. Neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. The "servants" were not the princes, whose attitude toward Jeremiah's words has already been indicated (verse 16), but the courtiers that surrounded the king more immediately.

MODERN ENEMIES OF GOD'S WORD. "My personal opinions are worth whatever I am worth, but when we lose an authoritative book, we shall lose a large element of the authority of the religion we preach." — *Prof. Cleland B. McAfee, D.D.*

The Bible ceases to have authority if it is held to be a collection of myths or of forgeries, a tissue of false history, of superstition, and fancy. Those that teach these things about the Bible are enemies of God's word, however much they may pretend to honor it, and however great beauty and wisdom they may find in its alleged fiction. It is absurd to say, for instance, that it makes no difference whether the Gospel of John was written by the beloved disciple of our Lord, or is a fabrication of some unknown Christian of the fourth century after Christ.

Teachers and writers who thus cut the Bible to pieces are the most conspicuous enemies of God's Word. Other enemies are those that handle it lightly, and make jests upon its phrases and characters. Still others are those that pretend to honor it but seldom go near it. And others are those that really know much about the words of the Bible but do not obey its precepts in their lives. Sometimes these hypocrites prove to be the Bible's deadliest foes. Indeed, if nominal Christians would only put into loving practice the Bible they profess to revere, then the Jehoiakims could do their worst with their penknives.

"But let me not forget to say that the penknife is used, far more constantly, and more in Jehoiakim's fashion, by those who are not Christians at all, by those who are living wholly irreligious lives, pushing God away from them, and doing things openly or in secret which are contrary to all that he has said." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

Samuel Cox compares Jehoiakim to a malicious woman who with her sharp tongue cuts and slashes at the reputation of some neighbor whom she chances to dislike, or to a politician who can see no good in some opponent and misrepresents and abuses him at every opportunity.

Illustration. "I can think of only one right way in which the Bible may be divided. A minister went into a house and saw a Bible on the stand and said, 'What a pity that this Bible should be so torn! You do not seem to take much care of it. Half the leaves are gone.' Said the man, 'This was my mother's Bible, and my brother John wanted it, and I wanted it, and we could not agree about the matter, so we each took a half. My half has been blessed to my soul, and his half has been blessed to his soul.' That is the only way that I can think of in which the Word of God may be rightfully cut with a penknife." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

III. THE BOOK TRIUMPHANT, vs. 26–32. "Thus passed away Jehoiakim's last chance, his last offer of mercy; and as he threw the torn fragments of the roll on the fire he threw there, in symbol, his royal house, his doomed city, the temple, and all the people of the land." — *Cambridge Bible.* But he was so far from realizing this that he spurned his councillors when they interceded for the roll, and haughtily ordered three of his officers to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah. "But the Lord hid them" is the simple, sufficient record. Some of their powerful friends aided them to escape and prevented their retreat from being discovered; but the Lord was over the deed, and it was through the divine favor that it succeeded, in the face of the angry and unscrupulous king. "The fortunes of spiritual religion hang upon the escape of Jeremiah." — *Cheyne.* The Bible is full of the providential escapes of God's children — Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Peter, Paul, Daniel, David, and many others.

Jehoiakim's fate is just what Jeremiah predicted. He leaned on the "broken reed," the Egyptian alliance, and dared to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian monarch invaded Palestine, easily conquered the opposing forces, and threw Jehoiakim into chains. The wretched king who had scouted God's Word seems to have spent some time in exile, and yet to have been contemptuously restored to Judah. For a time he ruled, then rebelled again, then was thrown into

32. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Bā'-rŭch the scribe, the son of Nē-rī'-ăh, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Je-hoi'-ă-kĭm king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words.

---

prison, then slain and given what Jeremiah describes as "the burial of an ass." The accounts of his closing years are confused and uncertain, but they were assuredly years of misfortune, shame, and ruin, as God's prophet had predicted in his roll that Jehoiakim had so scornfully destroyed.

32. **Then took Jeremiah another roll.** Jehoiakim had sent officers to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch, but God in some way which is not recorded preserved them. Doubtless, as suggested above, they were given hiding-places by their friends. **And gave it to Baruch the scribe.** Jeremiah was following the Lord's instructions in all this (verse 28). **Who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah.** Neither Baruch nor Jeremiah was afraid to repeat his bold act; yet this was not done in the spirit of bravado, but simply because Jehovah bade them. **All the words of the book which Jehoiakim . . . had burned.** The same splendid Oriental memory which fixed the prophecies in Jeremiah's mind and enabled him to dictate them in the first place, would make it easy for him to reproduce them; and we must add the immediate guidance and inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. **And there were added besides unto them many like words.** An example has just been given in verses 29–31, the prophecy of heavy punishment which was to fall upon the wicked king and all his house. The Bible is like certain plants, which spring up the more abundantly the more their shoots are cut off.

Illustration. "When the Bible was first printed in England, the Romish bishops and priests played Jehoiakim's game. They bought up every copy they could find, and made bonfires of them. The printers used the money to provide ten presses where there had been one, and the Bibles in the land increased fifty-fold until the priests found that the bonfire game did not pay. You may cut away God's Word or burn it, or trample it under your feet, but still you have to reckon with God, and the Word remains and it gets fulfilled whether you like it or not." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

HOW TO CONQUER THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S WORD. "The attempts that are made to destroy the Bible are all as inefficient as paper wads thrown at the moon. The Bible like asbestos seems to come out of the fire whiter." — *Rev. Joseph Dunn Burrell.*

"It would take more penknives than cutler ever sharpened to hew into permanent destruction the Word of God. He who shoots at this eternal rock will feel the bullet rebound into his own torn and lacerated bosom. . . . If infidelity is as successful in the next fifty years, in its war against the Bible, as it has been in the past fifty, the year 1950 will see the Bible in the possession of every man on the earth who has a hand to hold it." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

At the same time believers in the Bible must not leave it to defend itself; if they did, its enemies would speedily overcome it. The Bible lives only as it lives in the hearts of its grateful friends, and men will defend it if they love it.

One of the best weapons against the enemies of God's Word is a life lived consistently and powerfully in obedience to that Word. The one unanswerable argument against skeptics is, "The Bible does for me what no other book does. I owe to the Bible all the good that I have and am."

Also, believers in the Bible must be able and ready to give a reason for the faith that is in them. Doubters and skeptics use worn-out arguments, easily answered if we are well informed. The explorations in Bible lands have wonderfully confirmed the accuracy of Bible history. Scholarship has explained many apparent inconsistencies in the Bible accounts. Faith in the Bible doctrines does not rest on air, but on a solid foundation of fact and logic. All of these the Christian should have at his command with which to fend off the fiery darts of infidelity.

Education helps mightly to rout the enemies of the Bible. No one that has passed through a thorough course of Sunday-school training in his youth can easily be turned from his allegiance to Holy Writ.

Above all, however, we must depend upon the powerful aid of God's Holy Spirit himself. He will "take of the things of Christ and show them to men." He will add convincing force to our arguments. He will enable us to illustrate the Bible with persuasive, winsome, and noble lives. The Bible is his Book, and he is its ultimate Defender.

LESSON XI (24). — June 11.

JEREMIAH CAST INTO PRISON. — Jeremiah 37 : 1—38 : 13.

PRINT Jer. 38 : 4-13.

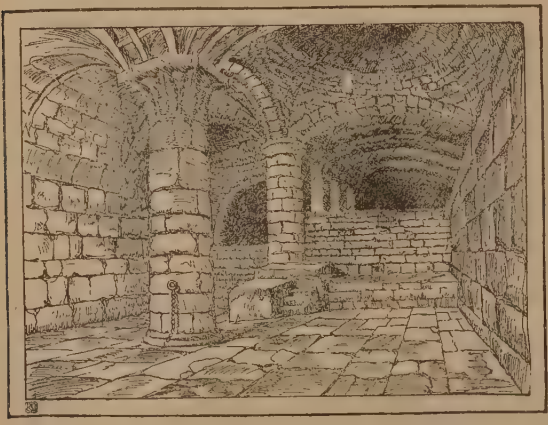
GOLDEN TEXT. — *Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah.* — JER. 1 : 8.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 40 : 1–8.
Reference Material: Gen. 39 : 19–23; Jer. 20 : 1–18; Luke 3 : 18–20; Acts 12 : 1–11; 16 : 19–34; 24 : 22–27; Rev. 1 : 9.
Primary Topic: HOW GOD CARED FOR JEREMIAH.
Memory Verse: Fear not; for I am with thee. Isa. 43 : 5.
Junior Topic: JEREMIAH'S BOLD TRUTH-TELLING.
Memory Verse: Prov. 12 : 19.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: FAITHFUL IN THE FACE OF DANGER.
Topic for Young People and Adults: LESSONS FROM JEREMIAH'S CHARACTER.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

In the Younger Classes the lesson may be made vivid by the use of a sand tray. If you have a model of the temple, introduce it, with blocks near by to represent the palace buildings in their enclosure. Have a special enclosure for the court of the guard, and a block in it to represent the building in which Jeremiah was finally kept. For the cistern in which Jeremiah was placed bury a stone jar in the sand, its mouth level with the surface. Let the jar be large enough to allow a hand to be inserted, and place in the bottom of the jar a series of questions on the lesson, written on squares of cardboard, the first question on top. The pupils will take turns in drawing out a question, reading it aloud, and answering it.

In the Older Classes, after bringing out the lesson story clearly, discuss the work and character of Jeremiah, drawing from the stirring story a number of lessons for to-day — the value of courage in reform, of persistence, of the use of varied methods, of human friendships, of faith in God. Different members of the class may be assigned to these points.



From Lewin's Life of St. Paul.

Vestibule of the Southern Approach to the Temple.

This was an underground passage on which stood Solomon's Palace south of the Temple.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jehoiakim died (Beecher) B. C. 597, and Jehoiachin's very brief reign of three months and ten days followed. Zedekiah came to the throne the next year, B. C. 596. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem B. C. 588, the tenth day of the tenth month, December-January.

Place. — Jerusalem, a dungeon, the king's palace, the guard's court of the palace.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The character of Zedekiah.
The character of Jeremiah.
The character of Ebed-melech.
Prisons in ancient times.
Prophets who have defied kings.
Examples of providential escapes in the Bible.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Faithful in the Face of Danger.

I. JEREMIAH'S UNWELCOME PROPHECIES, Jer. 37.
From Jehoiakim to Zedekiah.
Relying on Egypt.
The arrest of Jeremiah.
Jeremiah and the king.
A man of the truth.

II. JEREMIAH IN THE DUNGEON, Jer. 38 : 1–6.
The charge against Jeremiah.
The weak king.
The horrible dungeon.
God's servants in distress.

III. THE RESCUE OF JEREMIAH, Jer. 38 : 7–13.
Ebed-melech, kind and courageous.
Zedekiah the chameleon.
Jeremiah out of the dungeon.
The conclusion of Jeremiah's life.
The safety of God's servants.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Banks's *The Sunday-Night Evangel.* Burrell's *Hints and Helps.* Morrison's *The Footsteps of the Flock.* Maclaren's *Expositions.* Genung on Zedekiah in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* Fairweather's *Pre-exilic Prophets,* in *The Temple Series of Bible Characters.* Clark's *Old Lanterns for Present Paths.* Prof. W. H. Bennett in *The Expositor's Bible.* Cheyne in *The Pulpit Bible* and in *Jeremiah, His Life and Times.* Driver's *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.* "God Our Shield" in Munger's *The Freedom of Faith.* Sermons on the safety of God's children in Moule's *The Old Gospel for the New Age,* Newman Hall's *Sermons,* MacArthur's *The Attractive Christ.*

I. JEREMIAH'S UNWELCOME PROPHECIES, Jer. 37. FROM JEHOIAKIM TO ZEDEKIAH. After the miserable death of King Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin ("Jehovah will uphold") ascended the throne of Judah. He was only eighteen years old (2 Kings 24 : 8; only eight years old according to 2 Chron. 36 : 9), but he was old enough to show a character as corrupt as that of his father. He reigned for only three months and ten days when he was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and carried off into exile with his wives, his mother, his palace servants, the dignitaries and skilful artisans of Judah. He was kept in prison for a long time, but was afterwards released and given an allowance, though held in exile till his death. Jeremiah often calls him Jechoniah or Coniah.

Coin of Nebuchadnezzar.

Zedekiah ("Jehovah my righteousness") was the name given by Nebuchadnezzar to Mattaniah ("gift of Jehovah"), the uncle of Jehoiachin, brother of Jehoiakim. He was twenty-one years old when Nebuchadnezzar substituted him for his nephew on the throne of Judah, and he reigned for eleven years. He ruled over a nation whose best men had been taken away to Babylon, leaving only the baser sort. His people were sluggish and treacherous in political matters and were wholly given over to the worst idolatries. "Jehovah has forsaken his land," they foolishly said; "why should we not forsake him?" And so they did.

RELYING ON EGYPT. "For a people so raw and inexperienced in administration the prophets recognized one clear duty: to keep the oath which they had given to Nebuchadnezzar. But they acted like men intoxicated with new power; their accession to property and unwonted position turned their heads. Soon after the beginning of the reign we find Jeremiah giving emphatic warning both to his nation and the ambassadors of neighboring nations against a rebellious coalition; he has also an encounter with prophets who, in contradiction of his consistent message, predict the speedy restoration of Jehoiachin and the temple vessels. The king's visit to Babylon (Jer. 51 : 59) was probably made to clear himself of complicity in treasonable plots. Their evil genius, Egypt, however, is busy with the too headstrong upstart rulers; and about the middle of the reign Zedekiah breaks his covenant with his over-lord, and, relying on Egypt, embarks on rebellion. The prophetic view of this movement is, that it is a moral outrage; it is breaking a sworn word (Ezek. 17 : 15–19), and thus falsifying the truth of Jehovah." — *Prof. J. F. Genung.*

Nebuchadnezzar moved promptly against Zedekiah, capturing outlying fortresses and finally investing the city. The terrified Zedekiah tried to win the favor of Jehovah by getting the people to free all the Hebrews whom they held in slavery. Just at this time Egypt sent an army to fight the Chaldeans, and Nebuchadnezzar

withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem to meet his new enemy. Thereupon the relieved people of Judah, feeling that Jehovah had answered their prayers, forced their former slaves back into bondage — a piece of sharp dealing with the Almighty which Jeremiah was quick and severe in condemning. Moreover the prophet foretold the return of the Chaldean army, the captivity of Zedekiah and the destruction of Jerusalem.

THE ARREST OF JEREMIAH. During the temporary interruption of the siege caused by the approach of the Egyptian army Jeremiah left Jerusalem to go to Anathoth in Benjamin, his home town. His errand was connected with some land there which belonged to him (the full particulars are not given us), and which he went to get into his possession ; but as he was leaving Jerusalem at the gate of Benjamin he was arrested by the captain of the guard there on the absurd charge that he was deserting to the Chaldeans. This capture brought Jeremiah before the princes, who rejoiced that they had the prophet in their power under what seemed to them a plausible pretext. With cruel malignity they had Jeremiah beaten and then thrust into prison.

" The nobles of Judah were like that haughty Roman emperor who tore up the credentials of certain Parthian envoys before their eyes, not deigning so much as to look at them. The falseness of the charge against Jeremiah was easily provable. Was it the year of jubilee ? Did he have his ancestral home in Benjamin ? Was he entitled to a share in the restored property ? Had he tried to escape in former sieges ? Why did he not try to escape to the Egyptian army, which for the moment seemed the stronger ? Persecution is everywhere and always an unreasoning, inhuman, unholy abandonment to prejudice." — *Rev. Joseph Dunn Burrell.*

JEREMIAH AND THE KING. The prophet was kept in prison many days, during which time either the Chaldeans defeated the Egyptian army or the Egyptians withdrew to their own country ; then the Chaldeans returned to renew the siege of Jerusalem, just as Jeremiah had said they would.

Alarmed, the king sent for Jeremiah, and begged him to obtain a favorable word from Jehovah. Zedekiah did this secretly because, though he evidently regarded Jeremiah as a true prophet, he lived in weak fear of the nobles of his court, who were hostile to Jeremiah.

Here was a fine chance for Jeremiah to curry favor with the king, but he scorned to use it. His mouth was for nothing but the truth. He told Zedekiah bluntly that he would be captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and he added an indignant expostulation regarding his own imprisonment. He bade Zedekiah note the failure of his prophets that had declared that the king of Babylon would not attack Judah, and he begged that he, who had proved to be a true prophet, might not be sent back to die in a foul prison.

Zedekiah, who was under the influence of any man with whom he chanced to be talking, and who seems to have had a real respect for Jeremiah, had the prophet kept thereafter in the court of the guard, that is, the quarters of the palace police. This was " ' in the king's house,' above ground, with free access for light and air." — *Ellicott.* Besides, he gave orders that as long as there was bread left in the city, Jeremiah should have a loaf daily from Baker Street.

A MAN OF THE TRUTH. " Jeremiah teaches us the duty of loyalty to truth. In the beginning of his ' Morals ' Plutarch says, ' There is nothing more important for a man to receive, or more noble for a god to grant, than truth.' Socrates died sooner than renounce it, and that is one reason why Socrates is so admired by the modern spirit ; for the modern spirit, especially as it is exhibited in science, makes of all of us ' seekers after truth.' We do not need to be urged to respect truth as it appears in the stones and in the running brooks, but we need to be urged to loyalty to it as it appears in the Scriptures of God." — *Rev. Joseph Dunn Burrell.*

" With Jeremiah's shrinking, sensitive soul it must have been genuine torture to him to be in constant opposition to all the leading men of his time. There is but one test of the true reformer. Is he obedient to God's will ? Is his reform God's reform ? Jeremiah always stood this test." — *Rev. Francis E. Clark, D.D.*

II. **JEREMIAH IN THE DUNGEON,** Jer. 38 : 1–6. THE CHARGE AGAINST JEREMIAH. The Chaldeans had renewed the siege of Jerusalem, and there was despair in the hearts of all. The fate of Samaria, the northern capital, seemed impending over the Holy City. Jeremiah, removed from prison to the court of the guard, had renewed opportunities for the promulgation of his foreboding prophecies. " Your only hope," he said to each and all, " is in surrender to the foe. Stay in Jerusalem,

4. Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

5. And Zĕd-ĕ-kī'-ăh the king said, Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you.

6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Măl-chī'-jăh the king's son, that was in the court of the guard: and they let down

---

and you shall die with famine and pestilence ; those that are left shall perish by the sword. Go forth humbly and yield yourselves to the Chaldeans, and you shall at least live ; as exiles, doubtless, but still live." Jeremiah was concerned for the continued existence of his people. He knew that longer resistance to the terrible enemy meant their extinction. This knowledge he had from Jehovah.

No wonder the princes took alarm. These counsels seemed to them to be rank treason, playing directly into the hands of the foe. No wonder that four of the princes went to King Zedekiah and asked for Jeremiah's execution as a public enemy, weakening the soldiers and the common people alike. The four nobles were Shepatiah, of whom nothing further is known ; Gedaliah, the son of Pashur who beat Jeremiah once and put him in the stocks (Jer. 20 : 1–3); Jucal, the Jehucal of Jer. 37 : 3 ; and Pashur the son of Malchiah, who accompanied Zephaniah on the first deputation sent by Zedekiah to Jeremiah (Jer. 21 : 1) to ask for a message from Jehovah when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah.

4. **Then the princes said unto the king.** "Jeremiah in the court of the guard was really carrying on a struggle in which neither side either would or could give quarter. He was trying to revive the energies of the partisans of Babylon, that they might overpower the government and surrrender the city to Nebuchadnezzar. If he had succeeded, the princes would have had a short shrift. They struck back with the prompt energy of men fighting for their lives." — *Prof. W. H. Bennett.* It was — aside from the divine command — as if some one in Paris, as the Germans drew near in the World War, should have publicly and constantly urged a surrender of the city to the Central Powers. **Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death.** "From their point of view, as men responsible for the defence of the city, they were not unjustified in demanding Jeremiah's death, for his unfaltering predictions of utter disaster were calculated to unnerve and discourage the defenders." — *New Century Bible.* **Forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city.** This verse and verse 19 show that a considerable number of the Jewish soldiers had already taken Jeremiah's advice and surrendered to the Chaldeans. **In speaking such words unto them,** counselling them to yield to the Chaldeans. "John Knox was called a traitor often, when he urged Scotland to form an alliance with its old enemy, England." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.* **For this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.** "That is just what some of the great heads of corporations now say when an unselfish and heroic public servant rises up and exposes the grafters and points out the way of righteousness in business and political life. They have to admit things are bad, but they claim that these prophets of righteousness make business uncertain and do more harm than good." — *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.*

5. **And Zedekiah the king said.** "Zedekiah is a perfect monument of the miseries that wait upon weakness : he was everybody's friend in turn." — *Expositor's Bible.* **Behold, he is in your hand.** Zedekiah's answer was vague ; he did not expressly allow the princes to execute the prophet. Perhaps he wished them to relieve him of the responsiblilty of ordering Jeremiah's death ; perhaps he merely expected them to return Jeremiah to prison. "He was a coward, like Pilate, and wanted to make a semblance of keeping his own hands clean of a good man's blood." — *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.* **For the king is not he that can do anything against you.** This would seem like a strange admission for a king to make, even so weak a king as Zedekiah. The Greek translation may have preserved here the correct text ; it reads as a comment by Jeremiah : "For the king was not able to do anything against them."

6. **Then they took Jeremiah.** Perhaps they were afraid of the prophet's power with God, and so did not kill him outright ; but they took a course which they

Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire.

7. Now when Ē'-bĕd-mē'-lēch the Ethiopian, a eunuch, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin),

---

expected to result in his death. **And cast him into the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son.** "The king's son" may mean simply that he was of the royal family. "It was usual for a house to have an underground cistern in which water was stored. In this cistern, as it happened, there was no water, but a deep miry sediment." — *Prof. A. S. Peake. D.D.* "Every house in Jerusalem was supplied with a subterranean cistern, so well constructed that we never read of the city suffering in a siege from want of water." — *Dr. Payne Smith.* The so-called Grotto of Jeremiah at Jerusalem has vast cisterns under its floor, in the deepest of which the prophet is said to have been cast; but this cannot be the true place, for it was outside the city walls in the time of Jeremiah. **That was in the court of the guard.** The enclosure for the palace police, not far from the temple. **And they let down Jeremiah with cords.** An indication of the depth of the pit. **And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire.** Water had been there, but it was exhausted for the time, leaving only sediment. **And Jeremiah sank in the mire.** "It is conjectured that Ps. 69 may have been composed by Jeremiah on this occasion." — *Dummelow.* The note at the beginning of the psalm attributes it to David, but these notes are not part of the original manuscript. See especially verses 14, 15: "Deliver me out of the mire," etc.

GOD'S SERVANTS IN DISTRESS. "To Jeremiah in his prison there came a new revelation from God. The dishonor of the dungeon offered to Almighty God the opportunity of displaying his grace. When we are depressed, tired out, discouraged, sorrowing, we turn to the Lord and find him near and full of kindest grace:

"'When comforts are declining
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it after rain.'"
— *Rev. Joseph Dunn Burrell.*

"Joseph too was cast into a miry cistern; he too was drawn out again before his life had fled, through the mingled passions of pity and remorse. But far more vividly, if not so literally, the scene suggests the last sufferings of Jesus. In the lonely heroism of this man of sorrows we see outlined the heroic loneliness of Jesus. Both stood alone, in the city that they loved, hated by the very hearts they longed to help. Both would have saved the city from its enemies, if the city had only harkened to their voice. And then in Zedekiah have we no gleams of Pilate?" — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

III. **THE RESCUE OF JEREMIAH,** Jer. 38 : 7–13. This was perhaps the darkest time in the life of Jeremiah; but "it is always darkest just before day."

7. **Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian.** The learned men of the court, the men of power and influence, the leaders of the people, knew of the terrible wrong done Jeremiah, and let it pass with a shrug of their shoulders. The heart of this poor black man was tenderer than theirs, and he was more courageous than all of them. "Though his skin was black, his heart was white. Perhaps Jeremiah had been good to him, and that kindness had been bread cast upon the waters, which now came back to bless the prophet." — *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.* **A eunuch, who was in the king's house.** The royal palace may have overlooked the court of the guard, and Ebed-melech, while about his duties, may have looked from a window and have seen Jeremiah lowered into the cistern.

Illustration. It is interesting to remember that the New Testament also has an Ethiopian eunuch, who was familiar with palaces, the treasurer of Queen Candace; and he also sought and honored the truth. He was reading Isaiah when Philip met him; perhaps he also had read Jeremiah.

Heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. All news spreads fast among the gossiping, idle women of an Eastern harem. **(The king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin).** Masterman, in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* regards this gate as the same as the Sheep Gate, at the northeast angle of the wall, since Jeremiah in Jer. 37 : 13 passed through this gate on the way to his ancestral

8. Ē'-bĕd-mē'-lĕch went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die in the place where he is, because of the famine; for there is no more bread in the city.

10. Then the king commanded Ē'-bĕd-mē'-lĕch the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

11. So Ē'-bĕd-mē'-lĕch took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence rags and worn-out garments, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

---

possession in Anathoth, two and a quarter miles northeast of Jerusalem. Conder in Hastings's *Bible Dictionary*, places it in the east wall. It was called the Gate of Benjamin because it led out toward the territory of Benjamin in which Anathoth was situated. The king had gone there, Ellicott thinks, to direct the operations of the defenders of the city.

8. **Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house.** Perhaps other friends of Jeremiah went with him, but at any rate this black servant was the leader. **And spake to the king, saying.** The plea was probably made in the hearing of a considerable number, as Zedekiah was in a public place, sitting in a city gateway where such pleas were customarily made.

9. **My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet.** Ebed-melech dared to set himself in sharp opposition to the powerful princes, and condemn their course outright. It is easy to see that he and Jeremiah were kindred spirits. **Whom they have cast into the dungeon.** Those words conveyed then a horror which we have forgotten in our more merciful days. **And he is like to die in the place where he is, because of the famine.** "To die on the spot" is the translation suggested by Professor Driver. The famine that added its horrors to the siege of Jerusalem is powerfully pictured in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, as in 4 : 4–10, even mothers cooking and eating their own children. **For there is no more bread in the city.** If this is taken literally, there would be no point in the plea; for why take Jeremiah out of the dungeon only to die from famine just as soon in the city? Probably the eunuch only meant to remind the king of the scarcity of food, which would make it certain that Jeremiah would not be fed. His friends could not get at him in the dungeon, and all others would be looking after their own scanty supplies. Doubtless by that time the siege had lasted so long that all citizens were under strictly limited and carefully supervised rations. The rationing of food during the World War gives us just a hint of the conditions then.

10. **Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian.** The princes were not at hand, and Zedekiah as usual took his color from his surroundings. **Saying, take from hence thirty men with thee.** Some think that "thirty" is a copyist's error for "three" the two words being much alike in the Hebrew. Others argue that there was danger of interference from the hostile nobles, and that therefore thirty was not too large a number for the purpose. **And take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.** These words disclose something of the affection which Zedekiah seems to have felt for Jeremiah, though he was too cowardly to stand by him.

11. **So Ebed-melech took the men with him.** They were detailed, perhaps, from the palace guard. **And went into the house of the king under the treasury.** The "treasury" was the palace storeroom, and this was a lumber-room beneath it. **And took thence rags and worn-out garments.** "Torn and tattered rags," Driver translates it. **And let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.** He did not throw them down, thus forcing Jeremiah to grope for them in the dark, besides their getting foul with the mire. In every way this Ethiopian showed himself to be loving and thoughtful. Every good deed may be doubled in value by being done in the kindest way. "A kind, helpful deed is such a beautiful picture that it always ought to be well framed." — *Banks.*

12. And Ē'-bĕd-mē'-lĕch the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these rags and worn-out garments under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13. So they drew up Jeremiah with the cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

12. **And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah,** shouting down into the pit ; and how welcome was the freindly hail ! **Put now these rags and worn-out garments under thy armholes under the cords.** That is, between the cords and the armpits, so that the cords might not cut the flesh as Jeremiah was drawn up. Some have thought that Jeremiah simply sat in the loop of the cord, but we must remember that he was deeply sunken in the mire, out of which he must be wrenched with a strong pull. Besides, the prophet by this time was probably too weak and faint to help himself by holding on to the ropes, and was barely able to adjust them under his arms. **And Jeremiah did so.** Doubtless with some difficulty, in his weak and emaciated condition.

13. **So they drew up Jeremiah with the cords.** Thus David sang (Ps. 42 : 2) : "Jehovah brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay." And took him up out of the dungeon. He did not forget Ebed-melech's kindness, and afterwards from his imprisonment sent him a message from Jehovah promising him that he should not be slain by the Chaldeans, because he had put his trust in Jehovah (Jer. 39 : 15–18). " This Ebed-melech had everything against him. The poorest Jew treated him as a heathen dog. It would have been no wonder if the conduct of the people of Jerusalem had caused the name of Jehovah to be blasphemed by this Gentile. But he stands to all eyes as a witness that a faith, very imperfect as to its knowledge, may be so strong as to its substance that it unites him who exercises it with God, while the possessors of ecclesiastical privileges and of untarnished and full-orbed orthodox knowledge have no fellowship with Him." —*Alexander Maclaren.* **And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.** The princes seem to have made no farther effort toward Jeremiah's execution. Probably the end of the siege of Jerusalem in the capture of the city was near at hand, and the princes had too much else to occupy their attention.

THE CONCLUSION OF JEREMIAH'S LIFE. " After the fall of Jerusalem, the wretched remnant who had been left in Palestine carried Jeremiah by force to Egypt. Although they rejected his counsels, he was to them evidently an object of fetichistic dread. Amid his new surroundings the prophet continued to proclaim the divine mission of Nebuchadnezzar, and his future subjugation of the very country where they had hoped to find an asylum from the Chaldeans.

" Jeremiah's was a sad and pathetic ministry. It was in reality a prolonged martydom. Alone in Judah he had to withstand idolatry and immorality, the specious self-deception produced by mere outward reform, and the fanatical idea that in all circumstances they could rely upon Jehovah's protection.

" Tremendous failure as his life apparently was, the attitude of King Zedekiah and the action of those who compelled him to accompany them in their flight into Egypt, show the prevalence of a secret feeling that he was in the right.

" But he had now reached the close of his troubled ministry. In a foreign land, and in the final ruin of the last besotted remnant of his nation, he vanishes from our view. Tradition has it that he was stoned by his unbelieving countrymen, and certainly, in view of the essential tragedy of his life, it is not difficult to conceive how

> " ' some strong pathetic
> Face of a wounded prophet gazed, and then
> Sank in God's darkness grandly
> From out the infinite littleness of men.' "
> — *Rev. W. Fairweather.*

THE SAFETY OF GOD'S SERVANTS. " There are few who can say with Walter Scott, '*Sat est vixisse,*' it is enough to have lived. For vast multitudes life is unutterably sad and bitter, for many others it is dull and insipid, for others one long disappointment, for none is it its own reward. Man cannot well face life without some shield between. He may fight ever so bravely, but the spears of life will be too many and too sharp for him, and no shield will thoroughly defend him but God. When Hamlet caught sight of life, and saw what he had to do and bear, he said,

'I'll go pray.' You have but to name God before sorrow and it changes color; name him before burdens and they grow less; name him before the vanity of life and it disappears." — *Theodore T. Munger.*

Illustration. Bishop Moule tells the story of two Chinese, recent converts to Christianity, who were hung upon trees by a furious mob, who were beating them to death. The older, fearing for the firmness of the younger, cried to him: "Do not forsake Him who died for us; do not deny Him." "But indeed," said the young man afterwards (for they were rescued by soldiers just in time), "indeed he needed not to say it; the Holy Ghost so filled me that I felt no fear or trouble."

Illustration. "Travellers on the higher Alps sometimes rise to heights so great that they see beneath them the clouds rolling, the lightning flashing, and the rain falling in torrents; but the mountain peaks on which they stand are above the storm and are bathed in the glory of unclouded sunshine. Such is the experience of those who make God their refuge. They dwell in unbroken light, in undisturbed peace, and in unfailing joy." — *Rev. R. S. MacArthur, D.D.*

"Consider then, O my soul, how safe thou art, how fearless thou shouldst be!" — *Newman Hall.*

"O brave, strong, modest, undaunted spirit! may we learn thy secret of uncompromising, unswerving allegiance to the Lord of hosts. May we dare to be Jeremiahs. May we dare to stand alone against a hostile world, if need be, the Lord our only fortress and high tower." — *Rev. Francis E. Clark, D.D.*

LESSON XII (25). — June 18.

THE DOWNFALL OF JUDAH. — 2 Kings 25 : 1–21.

PRINT vs. 1–12.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* — GAL. 6 : 7.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 137 : 1–6.
Reference Material: Deut. 28 : 15–19, 25, 36, 37; 2 Chron. 36 : 11–23; Jonah 1 : 1, 2; Luke 19 : 41–44.
Primary Topic: GOD PUNISHING DISOBEDIENT PEOPLE.
Memory Verse: Fear God, and keep his commandments. Eccl. 12 : 13.
Junior Topic: THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM.
Memory Verse: Gal. 6 : 7.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: A NATION THAT DISOBEYED GOD.
Topic for Young People and Adults: RESULTS OF NATIONAL DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes. — Use a sand tray and make a model of Jerusalem, using strips of wood painted gray for the walls, blocks of wood for the temple, the palace, and the houses. Consult a map of Jerusalem for the position of the walls, the hills and valleys, and the pools. As you come to the approach of the Chaldeans, build up opposite the walls mounds of earth and other walls. Show a model of a catapult. By such means the fall of the city may be made very vivid.

The Older Classes. — One of the class may write and read to the class the story of the siege and the fall of Jerusalem written in the first person, in the character perhaps of Baruch. Another may read an original story of the escape and capture of Zedekiah and his subsequent fortunes, written in the first person in the character of one of his courtiers. Two discussions may be held, each led by a different member of the class. One will treat the results of individual disobedience to God and the other the results of national disobedience.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jerusalem was invested (Beecher) in December, B. C. 588 and was burned in July, B. C. 586. The latter is one of the great fundamental dates of Bible history.

Place. — Jerusalem, and Riblah in Syria, north of Damascus.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Ancient methods of carrying on a siege.
The strength of Jerusalem.
The siege as described in Lamentations.
The glory of Solomon's temple.
Cruel treatment of captives in ancient times.
What the fall of Jerusalem signified in history.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: A Nation That Disobeyed God.

I. ZEDEKIAH'S REBELLION AND DOWNFALL, VS. 1–7.
The folly of Zedekiah.
The siege of Jerusalem.
The flight of Zedekiah.
Zedekiah's cruel fate.
Results of personal disobedience to God.

II. JERUSALEM LAID WASTE, VS. 8–21.
The temple destroyed.
The walls broken down.
The people exiled.
Results of national disobedience to God.

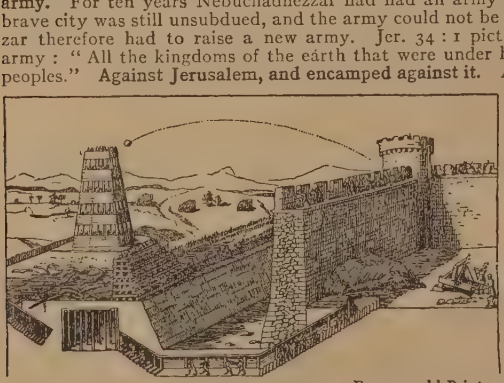
THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on 2 Kings, especially *The Cambridge Bible, Expositor's Bible, New Century Bible, Pulpit Commentary, Speaker's Commentary,* Ellicott, one-volume commentaries by Gray, Peake, and Dummelow. Maclaren's *Expositions.* Butler's *Bible Work.* Rawlinson's *Kings of Israel and Judah.* Edersheim's *History of Israel and Judah.* Gelkie's *Hours with the Bible.* Genung on Zedekiah in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* Kent's *History of the Hebrew People.* Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church, Vol. II.*

1. And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Něb-ū-chăd-nĕz'-zär king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it; and they built forts against it round about.

I. ZEDEKIAH'S REBELLION AND DOWNFALL, vs. 1–7. Zedekiah, the weak king of Judah, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful king of Babylon, as we learned in the last lesson. He relied on the help of Egypt, but the army which Egypt sent, altogether too late, was merely able to interrupt the siege of Jerusalem for a short time. It was either beaten outright, or forced to return to Egypt. Jeremiah steadily opposed the foolish defiance of the mightiest kingdom of the world at that time. His statesmanlike insight perceived that the only chance of survival which the little nation of Judah had was through submission to Babylonia, and this unpopular advice he urged with all eloquence and ardor. But he had king and rulers against him.

1. **And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign.** The reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Note that three times in this chapter the year, month, and day are given — the only instances of such exactness in the books of Kings. This shows how important these events were held to be. **In the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month.** The tenth month was December-January, the Hebrew year beginning about the middle of March. This day was observed (Ellicott) as a fast during the exile. **That Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came.** The matter was so important that the great king came in person and did not merely send a general. He knew that he might have to meet not only Judah but Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Edom, and, mightiest foe of all, the ancient kingdom of Egypt. **He and all his army.** For ten years Nebuchadnezzar had had an army besieging Tyre, but that brave city was still unsubdued, and the army could not be released. Nebuchadnezzar therefore had to raise a new army. Jer. 34 : 1 pictures the vastness of this army : "All the kingdoms of the earth that were under his dominion, and all the peoples." **Against Jerusalem, and encamped against it.** As the king moved southward he was uncertain whether to turn to the eastward against the Ammonites or westward against Jerusalem. Therefore he consulted divination by means of arrows (the direction pointed out by arrows let fall on the ground), images, and the entrails of victims, and all three agreed in sending him against Jerusalem. His troops ravaged all Judah, capturing its smaller fortified places, while the mon-



From an old Print.

Ancient Method of Siege.

2. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zĕd-ē-kī'-ăh.
3. On the ninth day of the *fourth* month the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.
4. Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war *fled* by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden (now the Chăl-dē'-ăns were against the city round about); and *the king* went by the way of the Ăr'-ă-băh.

---

arch with his main body of soldiers laid siege to the capital city. **And they built forts against it round about.** These forts may have been siege walls, surrounding the city, shutting the city in. From the tops of these walls missiles could be hurled against the defenders of Jerusalem. "Mounds were raised against the walls, especially toward the north, movable towers were brought up, the place was assailed with battering-rams and engines of various kinds, slingers and archers drew continually nearer, more and more galling the defenders with their weapons." — *Rawlinson.*

2. **So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.** "The agony was prolonged, partly through the natural strength of the city, partly through the momentary success of the king of Egypt in raising the siege (Jer. 37 : 5)." — *Cambridge Bible.* "At first all was energy. The useless houses which the kings and the nobles had reared were thrown down, and their place and materials used for the defences of the city (Jer. 33 : 4). It was a vain measure — and these defences only became the graves of those who held them." — *Edersheim.* "That a place, in all probability, of not more than twenty thousand inhabitants should have kept at bay the whole strength of Nebuchadnezzar for nearly eighteen months shows a noble defence, even admitting the natural strength of the position. But the fall of the city was only a question of time. The thud of the battering-rams shook the walls day and night; archers made the defence increasingly hard by constant showers of arrows from high wooden forts; catapults of all sizes hurled stones into the town with a force as deadly as that of modern bullets, and darts tipped with fire kindled the roofs of houses; mines were dug under the walls and attempts at escalade by ladders were renewed at every favorable opportunity. But the besieged were not behind in their resources of defence. Houses were demolished, that new walls might be built of their material inside each spot weakened by the battering-rams. The ramparts were vigorously defended by archers and slingers equal in bravery to those of the Chaldeans. The rams were caught, when possible, by doubled chains or ropes, to weaken their blows, or, if it might be, to capsize them. Lighted torches and firebrands were thrown on their roofs, and on those of the catapults, to set them on fire. The gates of the town were zealously defended against the efforts of the enemy to burst them open, or to burn them. Nothing, however, could prevent the final catastrophe." — *Cunningham Geikie.*

3. **On the ninth day of the fourth month.** That is, of June-July. **The famine was sore in the city.** "It was speedily followed, as is always the case, with an outbreak of pestilence. Food was well-nigh gone. There had long been no bread. Mothers were, at last, driven to murder and eat their children. The richest citizens wandered about searching for scraps in the dunghills. Effeminate nobles whose fairness and personal beauty had been their pride, were reduced to black-faced ghosts by hunger." — *Cunningham Geikie.* All this is powerfully pictured in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. **So that there was no bread for the people of the land.** Water also was so scarce that it was bought and sold. One-third of the people of Jerusalem are said to have perished from starvation at this time.

4. **Then a breach was made in the city.** An opening in the wall so large that the Hebrews could not repair it, and that the Chaldeans could make their way through it in irresistible numbers. "The temple was defended to the very last, the bravest of the warriors left perishing vainly in its courts. All classes, indeed, fought with desperation. Young men and women, veterans past their prime, and not a few who were stooping with years, fell with their faces to the hated foe. The storming of a town, or indeed any of the wild and infamous scenes of war, have in all ages been the same.

> "'The gates of mercy then are all shut up,
> And the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,
> Ranges, in liberty of bloody hand,
> With conscience wide as hell.' — *Shakespeare, Henry V.*

5. But the army of the Chăl-dē'-ăns pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

6. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Rĭb'-lăh; and they gave judgment upon him.

7. And they slew the sons of Zĕd-ĕ-kī'-ăh before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zĕd-ĕ-kī'-ăh, and bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

But, at last, all resistance was crushed, and Jerusalem lay at the mercy of Nebuchadnezzar." — *Cunningham Geikie.* **And all the men of war fled by night.** All the garrison of the city escaped in the only way they could, under cover of darkness. **By the way of the gate between the two walls.** This gate was evidently on the southeast of Jerusalem, as the king's journey lay in that direction. Some think that the two walls referred to were the main wall of the city and a second wall thrown out on the southern side to inclose the important water supply, the Pool of Siloam, and protect it from an enemy. Others thinks that the two walls extended along the bases of the eastern and western hills of Jerusalem, east and west of the Tyropœon Valley, and for some distance to the south. **Which was by the king's garden.** "The royal gardens were situated near the Pool of Siloam, at the mouth of the Tyropœon, and near the junction of the Hinnom with the Kidron valley." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **(Now the Chaldeans were against the city round about.)** There were besieging parties on all sides of the city, but the soldiers and the king seemed to have slipped through between two of these parties at an unguarded point. The Chaldeans were the Babylonians. "The original home of the Chaldeans was southeast of Babylonia proper, on the sea-coast, and from thence they pressed into Babylonia; and since Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar and founder of the new Babylonian dynasty, was of that stock, Chaldea from his time meant Babylonia." — *Prof. Edward L. Curtis.* **And the king went by the way of the Arabah.** The Arabah was the name of the deep north-and-south valley of the Jordan. Zedekiah's plan evidently was to find refuge in the wild mountian region to the east of the Jordan.

5. **But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king.** Josephus states that the king and his party had escaped the notice of the Chaldeans, but that Jewish deserters betrayed the fact of the flight and its direction, hoping thus to find favor with the victors. **And overtook him in the plains of Jericho.** "The plains of Jericho," named from the city of that name, designated the western part of the Jordan Valley. The eastern part was called "The plains of Moab." **And all his army was scattered from him.** "Not by the Chaldean attack; they had dispersed on reaching the open country." — *New Century Bible.* Doubtless the half-starved soldiers scattered in search of food.

6. **Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon,** Nebuchadnezzar (more accurately spelled Nebuchadrezzar). Many of the sculptures of Assyria and Babylonia show their kings, proudly seated on thrones, receiving rebel kings brought before them conquered. This was such a scene. **To Riblah.** Riblah (still called by that name) was a town in Syria, north of Damascus, on the Orontes. It was about fifty miles south of Hamath. At Riblah the son of Josiah, Jehoahaz, was thrown into chains by the Egyptians after his short reign of three months. **And they gave judgment upon him.** This entire account is repeated in Jer. 52 almost word for word, but the reading there is, "and he gave judgment upon him," referring to Nebuchadnezzar alone, which is doubtless the correct version.

7. **And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes.** "His daughters were set free." — *Edersheim.* **And put out the eyes of Zedekiah.** This cruel punishment was often inflicted by the Assyrians upon their vassals when they rebelled, the object being to make them unfit for future government. Thus the last sight upon which the unhappy king looked was the death agonies of his own sons. As late as 1840 the Shah of Persia inflicted the same punishment on revolting vassals. "Thus were fulfilled with startling literalness two prophecies which might well have seemed to be contradictory. For Jeremiah had said (34 : 3), 'Thine eyes shall behold the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.' Whereas Ezekiel had said (12 : 13), 'I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.'" — *Expositor's Bible.* **And bound him in fetters.** "With two chains" is the probable meaning. Thus Peter was bound (Acts 12 : 6). "Chained hand and foot, with

8. Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Něb'-ū-chăd-nĕz'-zär, king of Babylon, came Něb'-ū-zär-ā'-dăn the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.

9. And he burnt the house of Jehovah, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burnt he with fire.

---

a ring through his lips as if he were a wild beast, he was put into a cage and carried off to Babylon." — *Geikie.* Three kings of Judah were now held captive by their enemies,— Jehoahaz in Egypt and Jehoiachin and Zedekiah in Babylonia. **And carried him to Babylon.** The account in Jeremiah (Jer. 52 : 11) adds, "and put him in prison till the day of his death." The Chaldeans did not intend to risk the possibility of another revolt in Judah. "A Jewish tradition states that at Babylon Zedekiah was compelled to grind in a mill, like an ordinary slave." — *Rawlinson.*

RESULTS OF PERSONAL DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD. Zedekiah's personal character, in spite of his half-hearted favoring of Jeremiah, was of the worst. He made his capital, and even the temple of Jehovah, the scene of the foulest idolatries. His administration of justice was a farce. He took a solemn oath of fidelity to Nebuchadnezzar and then broke it without compunction. With it all he was weak, undecided, cowardly, and contemptible. He suffered from the accumulated evils brought on by godless predecessors; his own wickedness was sufficient to bring all punishments upon his head.

"Future generations forgot the weakness of Zedekiah, as they forgot the faults of his royal companions in misery, and thought of him only as gentle and righteous. A fast is still held on the tenth day of the fifth month to bewail his fall." — *Geikie.*

Zedekiah's fall teaches us that "all departure from God is ruin. We slay ourselves by forsaking him, and every sinner is a suicide. We live under a moral government, and in a system of things so knit together that even here evil transgression receives its just recompense — if not visibly and palpably in outward circumstances, yet really and punctually in effects on mind and heart, which are more solemn and awful. Sin and sorrow are root and fruit." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

II. JERUSALEM LAID WASTE, vs. 8–21. "Judah, like the northern kingdom, came to an end from the same causes, and in accordance with the same unchangeable laws which have repeatedly operated in the downfall of other kingdoms. As the prophets so clearly pointed out, religious, social, and moral corruption led to the weakening and disintegration of the state." — *Prof. Charles F. Kent.* We have now reached the last scene of the long tragedy.

8. **Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month.** Jer. 52 : 12 says the *tenth* day. The fifth month was our July-August. Jerusalem was captured in the fourth month; this delay of a month before it was thus dismantled was probably because the general waited for instructions to come from Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. **Which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.** Jer. 52 : 29 dates this event in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. Second Kings probably follows the Hebrew method of counting as a full year the portion at the end of the year in which the reign began. **Came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard.** Nebuzaradan signifies "Nebu gives seed," that is, a son. Both this name and Nebuchadnezzar are based upon that of the god Nebu. "Captain of the guard" is in the Greek translation, the Septuagint, "the chief cook." "The Hebrew word means 'one who slaughters' — either animals (for food) or men (enemies); in 1 Sam. 9 : 23, 24 it is translated 'cook.' The two functions were originally performed by the same men." — *Cambridge Bible.* **A servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.** Nebuzaradan was one of Nebuchadnezzar's favorite officers.

9. **And he burnt the house of Jehovah.** "The temple was plundered. All that remained of its often-rifled splendors was carried away, such as the ancient pillars Jachin and Boaz, the masterpieces of Hiram's art, the caldron, the brazen serpent, and all the vessels of gold, of silver, and of brass." — *F. W. Farrar.* **And the king's house.** Solomon's palace, doubtless with many changes and additions. It was a magnificent residence, next to the temple in the upper city. Solomon was thirteen years in building it, while the building of the temple took only seven years. The palace was built of hewn stone and cedar. Its throne room contained a great ivory throne overlaid with gold. There was a great "hall of pillars," also a hall of judg-

10. And all the army of the Chăl-dē'-ăns, that were *with* the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

11. And the residue of the people that were left in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude, did Něb'-ū-zär-ā'-dăn the captain of the guard carry away captive.

12. But the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

---

ment, an armory and treasure house. Part of the palace was "the House of the Forest of Lebanon," one hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide and forty-five feet high, containing four rows of great cedar pillars. The "Palace of Pharaoh's Daughter" was also part of the splendid structure. **And all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burnt he with fire.** "The common houses were spared for the poor who were left (verse 12)." — *Ellicott.* "The very bones and framework of Jerusalem appeared to be wrapped in flames. The walls and gates seemed to lament and cry as they sank into the earth. The sepulchres, even the consecrated catacombs of the kings, were opened, and the bodies thrown out to the vultures and beasts of prey, which flocked to their frightful feast outside the walls. Jackals wandered even over the sacred hill of Zion. The havoc and carnage in the streets was such that passers-by avoided every one they met, lest they should be defiled by their bloody touch." — *Dean Stanley.*

10. **And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard.** It must have been a numerous host, nevertheless, to do what was required of it. **Brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.** Not necessarily razed them completely, but made so many and so large breaches in them that they would be worthless for purposes of defence.

11. **And the residue of the people that were left in the city.** All the population of Jerusalem that remained was carried off. **And those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon.** During the long siege of Jerusalem, with its famine and other horrors, numbers of the Jews had made their way out of Jerusalem and over to the camp of the Chaldeans. Jeremiah was charged with trying to do this, and it was also asserted by the nobles that the prophet's declarations that the city must surrender led many to desert to the enemy. **And the residue of the multitude.** This would mean the same as "the residue of the people" at the beginning of the verse, so that the true reading is probably that of the parallel passage, Jer. 52 : 15, which gives "artificers" instead of "multitude." "Nebuchadnezzar had no doubt needed them for his great buildings at Babylon, and their deportation would render more difficult any attempt to refortify Jerusalem." — *Expositor's Bible.* **Did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away captive.** It is not definitely said, here or elsewhere, that they were carried away to Babylonia, but that may well be inferred.

12. **But the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land.** That is, the poorest outside Jerusalem. **To be vinedressers and husbandmen.** "Husbandmen" might be translated "for the care of the cisterns." In a dry country like Palestine it was of the greatest importance to keep the water reservoirs from being choked up or from collapse of their masonry. All of this was "probably in expectation of a future colonization from Babylonia." — *Edersheim.*

THE SPOILING OF THE TEMPLE. "Everything worth taking had been brought out of the sanctuary before it was set on fire; the metal work of all kinds, which was of too great an amount to weigh, and the sacred utensils remaining since Solomon's time, formed the special booty." — *Geikie.*

With sad piety the Chronicler records the various utensils that were taken, and the rich pillars that were despoiled of their costly adornments. Much was of brass, and there was also much silver and gold. It was indeed great gain for heathendom.

So perished one of the seven wonders of the world. Solomon is said to have gathered to spend upon the marvelous building the enormous sum of from $2,450,000,000 to $4,900,000,000, according to the system of weights used. Thirty thousand men were employed to cut cedar for it in the Lebanon mountains. The stone masons and the carriers of material numbered 150,000. The interior of the completed edifice was ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. In richness of adornment it was the supreme wonder of the world.

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE LEADERS. "Lastly, signal punishment was dealt out to those who were regarded as ringleaders or as representative persons during the late rebellion. 'Seraiah, the chief priest' (high priest), 'Zephaniah the second priest' (probably the substitute of the high priest), 'and the three keepers of the door' — that is, the chief of the Levites who kept watch at the three temple gates (Jer. 38 : 14), were brought before the court which sat at Riblah, and executed. The same punishment as that of the temple officials was meted out to the royal officers of the city — the chamberlain who had charge of the troops, five of the king's councillors, and the secretary of the general of the army. With these were executed sixty of the people of the land, either as prominent in the late rebellion, or as representing the people generally." — *Edersheim.*

RESULTS OF NATIONAL DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD. "This fall of Jerusalem declares plainly what brings down God's judgments. The terms on which Israel prospered and held its land were obedience to God's law. A nation's religious attitude is a most potent factor in its prosperous development. It is not accidental that, on the whole, stagnant Europe and America are Roman Catholic, and the progressive parts Protestant. Nor was it causes independent of religion that scattered a decaying Christianity in the lands of the Eastern Church before the onslaught of wild Arabs, who, at all events, did believe in Allah. So there are abundant lessons for politics and sociology in the story of Jerusalem's fall." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

"Sin ruined all — the house of David, the temple of Solomon, the city of so many grand and holy memories. There is no heart, no house, no kingdom, no church, that sin will not undermine and destroy. In the end of the book God seems to weep over Jerusalem, but he would not force upon it his worship or his law. He spoke to the kings and the people by his prophets. If they would not hearken, nothing could prevent their destruction. In a later age the Son of God wept over Jerusalem, because its children would not be gathered to him. The same love of God yearns still over cities, countries, churches, families, and individual men, women, and children." — *Donald Fraser.*

This lesson presents a terribly dark picture, yet it is not all dark. The punishment of God's chosen people sought their reformation, and did not altogether fail of its purpose. "In the providence of God the better portion of the people were carried into exile (Jer. 24; Ezek. 11 : 15, 16), and at the end of the exile there was a fresh sifting. The better portion of the exiles, those who truly feared God and trusted his promises, came back to Palestine, while those who had less faith and piety remained behind, in the homes they had in the land of their exile. By this discipline the power of idolatry over the people was completely broken, and they never relapsed into it again. The evil tendencies previously existing were checked.

A total change was brought about. From this time forth the Jews were as steadfast in adherence to their ancestral religion as they had previously been prone to depart from it." — *William Henry Green, D.D.*

"Who serves his country best?
Not he who for a brief and stormy space
Leads forth her armies to the fierce affray.
Short is the time of turmoil and unrest;
Long years of peace succede it, and replace.
There is a better way.

"He serves his country best
Who lives pure life and doeth righteous deed,
And walks straight paths, however others stray,
And leaves his sons as uttermost bequest
A stainless record which all men may read.
This is the better way." — *Susan Coolidge.*

LESSON XIII (26).— June 25.

REVIEW. JUDAH'S PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah.* — Ps. 33 : 12.

Devotional Reading: Ps. 65 : 1, 2, 8–13.
Primary and Junior Topic: MEN WHO OBEYED GOD.
Primary Memory Verse: I will take heed to my ways. Ps. 39 : 1.
Junior Memory Verses: Ps. 1 : 1–3.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: TRUE AND FALSE LEADERS OF JUDAH.
Topic for Young People and Adults: SOME LESSONS FROM JUDAH'S HISTORY.

Of the following reviews, some are suited to younger classes, some to older ones. The teacher will choose the form of review he thinks adapted to his class, and may modify or combine the various plans at his pleasure.

I. A PORTRAIT REVIEW.

Tell the members of the class that each of them is to be an artist at the next session, and is to paint and exhibit a portrait. You will have a gallery of twelve portraits, and you have the catalogue in your hand. Then you will have your pupils draw slips, on each of which you have written the name of one character of the quarter's lessons. This character the pupil is to describe in the best way he can, by an essay, a talk, perhaps a story; but the "portrait" must be original. You may present some appropriate picture (connected with the Old Testament), nicely framed, to the one who, on written vote of the class, gives the best "portrait." The twelve characters from the lessons may be the following: Asa, Joash, Jehoiada, Uzziah, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Hilkiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Jehoiakim, Ebed-melech, Zedekiah.

II. A GOLDEN-TEXT REVIEW.

Divide the thirteen golden texts of the quarter among the members of your class. If you have more than thirteen members, repeat the texts. If you have fewer than thirteen members, ask who would like to do two texts. The pupils will illuminate the texts at home, each in his own way, and you may offer a reward for the best, a jury outside the class to make the decision.

In the class session place the texts before the class one by one, and the person who drew the text is to be ready to answer all the questions on his lesson the other pupils will ask, the teacher adding questions if the ground is not well covered.

III. A THREE-QUESTIONS REVIEW.

This review is to be conducted with the aid of the beautiful set of lesson pictures published by the publishers of this volume. Make a narrow pasteboard box, just large enough for the pictures and open at the top. Fasten strings to the pictures and make three loops in each string. Fasten to the box an upright strip of wood with a tack over which the loops fit. Drawing the picture up to the first loop will show one-third of it; two-thirds will be disclosed when the second loop is used, and the third loop will present the entire picture.

The teacher will write out three questions for each lesson, bringing out all the leading facts in the lesson. He will ask these questions one after the other, pulling the string up one loop with each question. Remove each picture after the three questions on its lesson have been answered. This form of review may be used in the younger classes.

IV. A QUESTION TOURNAMENT.

Classes in the Intermediate department, and those in the Senior and Young People's departments as well, will enjoy a question tournament. Divide the class into two sides, each side with a leader. The sides will meet during the week and prepare two lists of questions on the quarter's lesson, each set to be examined by the teacher to make sure that all the questions are fair ones and clearly expressed.

In the review session the two sides will face each other. First the leader of one side will ask a question. The other side will consult in whispers and then answer the question. If the answer is not correct, and if the first side can give the correct answer, the first side has won a point. The sides will alternate asking questions, and the victorious side will be the one that has failed the fewest times. It may be understood that the beaten side shall give a social to the victors.

V. AN HISTORICAL REVIEW.

The review in the adult classes may well be made a study of the forces that retarded and those that hastened the crisis in the history of Judah, the fall of Jerusalem. Divide the following topics among the members of the class, asking each to write an essay or give a talk on his subject, the time being carefully divided among them. Each topic will be discussed with illustrations from all parts of the quarter's lessons.

Favorable Forces.

Influence of the prophets.
Influence of the high priests.
Influence of the good kings.
Influence of godly citizens.
Influence of the Word of God.
Influence of the House of God.
Influence of the Divine Providence.

Opposing Forces.

The power of idolatry.
The power of evil kings.
The power of evil princes.
The power of heathen nations.
The power of Satan.

VI. A CHART REVIEW.

This form of review goes back through the first quarter, and surveys the history from the division of the kingdom to the fall of Jerusalem. For this purpose ask each pupil to make at home a chart consisting of a large sheet of manila paper, with a straight line drawn down the center. Divide the straight line into uniform divisions, each representing a decade (or half a decade, if preferred). The entire line represents the time between the accession of Rehoboam and the capture of Jerusalem. Using the chronological tables in the front of this book, the teacher will make a similar chart and write in all the principal events of the two quarters' lessons at the proper places on the vertical line, placing the events that occurred in Israel on the left of the line and those that occurred in Judah on the right of the line. This chart the teacher will place before the class and will have them copy it during the session. Add certain features to the chart as you go along; for example, have the pupils make broad black underscores under the names of the bad kings and place stars after the names of the good kings. Symbols may be drawn to stand for certain events: a roll to represent the discovery of the Law, the mouth of a pit to represent Jeremiah's imprisonment, six wings to represent the call of Isaiah, and the like. Questions will be asked as the chart proceeds, the teacher thus refreshing the pupils' memory and bringing out the central facts and teachings of the great history.

The Exile and the Restoration

THIRD QUARTER.

JULY 2 — SEPTEMBER 24, 1922.

(THIRD QUARTER OF A NINE-MONTHS COURSE.)

LESSON I (27). — July 2.

EZEKIEL, THE WATCHMAN OF ISRAEL. — Ezekiel 2 : 1—3 : 27.

PRINT Ezek. 2: 1–6 ; 3 : 17–21.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* — ISA. 55 : 6, 7.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 121.
Reference Material : 2 Kings 17 : 13, 14 ; Isa. 6 : 1–13 ; Jer. 1 : 1–19 ; Ezek. 33 : 1–6 ; Matt. 23 : 37–39 ; Acts 20 : 18–21, 26, 27, 29–31.
Primary Topic : THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP.
Lesson Material: Ezek. 34 : 11–16.
Memory Verse : I am the good shepherd. John 10 : 11.
Junior Topic : EZEKIEL WATCHES AND WARNS ISRAEL.
Lesson Material : Ezek. 2 : 1–6 ; 3 : 17–21.
Memory Verse : Isa. 55 : 3.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : FACING A HARD TASK.
Topic for Young People and Adults : THE DUTY OF WARNING OTHERS.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Primary Classes, studying the shepherd lesson, will be interested in learning about the ways of Oriental shepherds with their sheep, and in hearing of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

The Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Classes will emphasize the comparison of Ezekiel to a watchman, learning about the duties of watchmen in times of war and of peace, and applying the thought to their own relations to others and their guard over their own souls. They are to be watching over the best interests of their school, their Sunday-school class, their homes, their friends, their neighborhood and town.

The Older Classes will study the character and work of Ezekiel and will seek to get a clear idea of his book. Get the pupils to read as much of the book as possible in preparation for the lesson. Some important civic teachings should be brought out, especially the duty of all citizens to watch over the public welfare and to hold up the hands of their elected officers.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — If Ezekiel was deported with King Jehoiachin, he became an exile (Beecher) in B. C. 597 and began to prophesy in B. C. 593.

GENERAL VIEW OF JERUSALEM.

Place. — Tel-abib, an unidentified place on the River Chebar, which was probably one of the large canals intersecting Babylonia.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

A comparison of the calls of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.
A comparison of the symbolism of Ezekiel and of Solomon's temple.
A comparison of Ezekiel and the book of Revelation.
The circumstances surrounding the exiles.
The prophet as watchman.
Watchman duties of Christians.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Ezekiel Faces a Hard Task.

I. EZEKIEL'S VISION AND CALL, Ezek. 1 : 1—3 : 3.
The prophet and his book.
The vision of God.
The prophet commissioned.
The roll eaten.
Hard tasks to which we are called.

II. EZEKIEL ENTERS ON HIS WORK, Ezek. 3 : 4–27.
The prophet sent forth.
Borne to Tel-abib.
A watchman to Israel.
The shepherd sermon. (Ezek. 34 : 11–16).
The beginning of Ezekiel's work.
Our duty to warn others.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Ezekiel and his work are treated in Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Geikie's *Old Testament Characters*, Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible*, Lewis in *Men of the Old Testament*, Wells's *Bible Miniatures*. Works on the prophets by Eiselen, Fowler, W. R. Smith, W. J. Beecher, Findlay, etc. *Commentaries* on Ezekiel by Davidson (*Cambridge Bible*), Redpath (*Westminster Commentaries*), Lofthouse (*New Century Bible*), Ellicott, Parker, etc. Chapters on the first three chapters of Ezekiel in Phillips Brooks's *The Candle of the Lord*, Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons, Vol. VIII*, Whyte's *Bunyan Characters*, Herford's *Anchors of the Soul*, Watkinson's *The Duty of Imperial Thinking*, Banks's *The Sunday-Night Evangel*, Selby's *The Unheeding God*, McKenzie's *A Door Opened*, Bushnell's *Sermons on Living Subjects*, Kingsley's *The Water of Life*, Westcott's *Peterborough Sermons*, Wesley's *Sermons, LVI*, Lunsaulus's *Paths to the City of God*, Spurgeon's *Sermons, Second Series*. *Poems* by Keble (*The Christian Year*), Thomas Aird, Barbara Miller MacAndrew, John G. Whittier. Dante's *Purgatorio, XXIX*, 100–102.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Ezekiel (in a window at Chatres) bearing St. John on his back. Statue by Donatello in Florence. Painting by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Rome. Paintings by Burne-Jones and Sargent (the latter in the Frieze of the Prophets, Boston Public Library).

Symbols of Ezekiel.

I. EZEKIEL'S VISION AND CALL, Ezek. 1 : 1 — 3 : 3. THE PROPHET EZEKIEL. He is the third of the Greater Prophets, the others being Isaiah and Jeremiah, whom we have already studied, and Daniel, whom we are to study. They are called Greater because their books are larger, though they were also among the greatest in spiritual power. Some of the Minor Prophets, however, such as Amos, equal them in all but the length of their writings.

His name, compounded with *El*, "God," means "God strengthens." "Hezekiah" is the same word compounded with Jah, meaning "Jehovah strengthens."

His family is not described, except that he is called "the son of Buzi." Of Buzi nothing is known, but some Jewish authorities consider him to have been Jeremiah, on the slight ground that Ezekiel showed so thorough a knowledge of Jeremiah's writings. Ezekiel, we are told, lost his beloved wife suddenly, but was bidden not to mourn for her outwardly (Ezek. 24 : 15–27).

His calling was that of a priest, and he seems to have entered upon his prophetic work at the age of thirty (Ezek. 1 : 1), the time of life

Ezek. 2 : 1. And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee.

when priests began their labors (Num. 4 : 3, etc.).

Ezekiel was an exile from Judah, having been carried away in the first captivity, when Nebuchadnezzar bore into exile the young King Jehoiachin, with many leading citizens, including many priests. In Babylonia the exiles seem to have been treated leniently. They had houses to live in, and we do not read that they were persecuted. Doubtless, however, they constantly longed to return to their dearly loved homeland.

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL. "Ezekiel may be said to have given us the only 'work of art' in the Old Testament. As Smend says, the whole book is the 'logical development of a series of thoughts on a carefully elaborated and schematic plan; nothing can be removed without disarranging the whole.' . . . More than any other writer, Ezekiel is the architect of his composition. The book as a whole falls into two equal parts, each of which is divided and subdivided, every part preparing us for what immediately follows, and reminding us of the ordered symmetry of a cathedral."— *Lofthouse.*

As to Ezekiel's style, "there are three things in particular which are characteristic of the book: symbolical figures, symbolical actions, and visions. The three are related to one another, being all more or less the creations of an imagination always grandiose and often beautiful."— *Prof. A. B. Davidson.* Ezekiel is fond of interrogations and interjections; he delights in proverbs, parables, allegories; he is master of the dirge or lament.

The first half of the book is occupied with prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, and the second half with prophecies of their restoration, and of the eternal peace of the people of God. The prophecies are chiefly symbols, in action or word, followed by explanations. "His purpose was twofold: (1) to keep before the exiles the national sins which had brought Israel so low; and (2) to sustain their faith by predictions of national restoration, the punishment of their enemies, and ultimate earthly glory."— *Rev. James M. Gray, D.D.*

THE VISION OF GOD. The beginning of Ezekiel's great life work was a glorious vision of God, such as came to Isaiah in the temple at Jerusalem. To Ezekiel this vision came in far-off Chaldea, by the Canal Chebar, in the midst of the sad companies of exiles. He knew the very time, the fifth day of the fourth month (June), in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. It was also "the thirtieth year," probably of Ezekiel's age.

This vision of God appeared to Ezekiel in the midst of a great storm cloud, with a bright light in the center. This light, as it drew nearer, was seen to come from a resplendent chariot whose four sides were four living creatures, each with four wings, and two wings of each stretched out and touching to inclose the chariot. Each living creature had four faces looking in four directions,— those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. Beneath them were four double wheels (each made up of two wheels at right angles to each other), so that the chariot moved in any direction without turning, as the living creatures had a face looking in each direction. Over this chariot was an appearance like the blue vault of the sky, and above that what seemed to be a shining throne, and on the throne a flaming appearance in the likeness of a man, with rainbow splendor all about him. No wonder that the glorious vision sent Ezekiel upon his face, prostrate in fear and reverence.

THE PROPHET COMMISSIONED. 1. **And he said unto me.** "Who is the wondrous 'he' who spoke unto Ezekiel? We are not told as a substantive who is referred to, yet we feel that the reading of the vision permits no other supposition than that it was the most high God whose glories had filled the firmament, and whose majesty had thrown down the prophet upon his face in lowliest humility and adoration."— *Joseph Parker.* **Son of man.** This is the name by which constantly (more than ninety times) Ezekiel is called throughout his book. Elsewhere in the Old Testament it is applied to a prophet only once, in Dan. 8 : 17. Some hold that the title is used to point out Ezekiel's lowliness as compared with the Divine Majesty — he is merely a son of man. Others believe that it exalts Ezekiel: he is the Man of the day, the Leader of his people. "Son of man" was our Lord's favorite title for himself; perhaps he used it in allusion to Dan. 7 : 13, "There came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man." He was typical man, perfect man,

2. And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet ; and I heard him that spake unto me.

3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me : they and their fathers have transgressed against me even unto this very day.

4. And the children are impudent and stiff-hearted : I do send thee unto them ; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah.

5. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

---

such as Ezekiel could never be. **Stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee.** At the sight of the glory of the Lord (Ezek. 1 : 28) the prophet had fallen on his face, in awe and worship, as Saul fell prone before the glorious vision of Christ on the Damascus road. That was fitting and inevitable ; no one can to-day get a clear understanding of God without falling before him in trembling adoration. But God will not have even worship continuous ; he wants service also, and to that end he calls on his worshiping servants to rise and hear their orders. " When God raised Ezekiel and set him on his feet before he spoke to him, was it not a declaration of the truth that man might lose the words of God because of a low and grovelling estimation of himself, as well as because of a conceited one ? " — *Phillips Brooks.*

Illustration. " David prayed in keen consciousness of his sinful life, 'Create in me a new heart, O God,' and God heard his prayer. From that hour David walked upright, with his face toward the sky. Saul, stricken down on the way to Damascus, and his eyes opened to see the wickedness of his life, heard the voice of Jesus saying to him, 'Arise and stand upon thy feet,' and from that hour Paul went forth to his splendid and heroic life. Once in Worcester, Mass., at midnight, a poor drunkard had a hand laid on his shoulder by a Christian man. It was like a call from heaven to rise out of drunkennesss and stand upon his feet, and from that hour John B. Gough walked forth sober, a new creature in Christ Jesus, to be a blessing to the world." *Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.*

2. **And the Spirit entered into me.** The Holy Spirit of God filled the prophet, as he will fill any true believer, and gave him strength to stand in God's presence and receive the further revelation.

Illustration. " The presence of Napoleon the Third seemed to lower for the time being the vitality and intelligence of those who came into contact with him, and so acted as to destroy their self-possession. By some occult spell cast over them he could disturb their recollectedness and so exhaust their power that it was impossible for them to be at their best in his company."— *Rev. Thomas G. Selby.* When any one comes under the divine influence, on the contrary, all his powers are exalted, and he stands on his feet, for the first time in full possession of himself.

3. **And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel.** " Israel " no longer means the Northern Kingdom, which had perished, but its remnants, and also Judah,— that is, all the Jews. **To nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me.** " Nations " implies that Ezekiel was not to confine his work to the Jews, but was also to give God's message to the Gentiles. These included Tyre, Zidon, and Egypt (Ezek. chaps. 25–32). **They and their fathers have transgressed against me unto this very day.** The wickedness of the Jews began with their idol-worshiping even in Egypt (Ezek. 20 : 8).

4. **And the children are impudent and stiff-hearted.** In Ezek. 3 : 7 the prophet speaks of their " hard foreheads." We would say that they were brazen-faced and hard-hearted. **And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah.** God puts words into the mouths of his faithful servants, so that they can speak with the utmost confidence, knowing that it is not they that speak, but God speaking through them. This confidence Ezekiel had in all his messages ; see Ezek. 5 : 5, 7, 8, 11, etc.

5. The Jews, Ezekiel is warned, may hear him or refuse to hear him, but in either case they will **know that there hath been a prophet among them.** The prophet's words would be a savor of death or of life (2 Cor. 2 : 15, 16), but men will have had their chance, and will know that they have had it.

6. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions : be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

6. **And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them.** When Moses was commanded to go before Pharaoh and bid him let the Israelites go free, he shrank from the hazardous task. When Jonah was commanded to preach the true religion in Nineveh, he fled in fear in the opposite direction. Some such terror seems to have filled the heart of Ezekiel when God bade him proclaim his message to hostile people. **Though briers and thorns are with thee.** These "briers and thorns" were the heathen all around Ezekiel. The same words are used in Ezek. 28 : 24 to describe the heathen nations surrounding the Jews in Palestine. **And thou dost dwell among scorpions.** "The scorpion is dangerous for its sting. Those amongst whom the prophet was dwelling would endeavor to injure him with venomous acts and words."— *Westminster Commentary.* **Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.** Literally, "a house of rebellion," a characteristic expression of Ezekiel's. "The charge given to the young Ezekiel may be compared with that of St. Paul to the young Timothy, who had to do with Jews and Gentiles alike : 'Be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching' (2 Tim. 4 : 2)." —*Henry A. Redpath, Litt.D.*

A Parchment Roll Open and Written in Columns.

THE ROLL EATEN. Next follows one of Ezekiel's characteristic symbols. A mysterious hand appears, like "the form of an hand" which in Ezek. 8 : 3 is "put forth" by Ezekiel's supernatural visitant. In this hand is a roll of parchment or vellum, the ancient "volume" or book, written on both sides, the writing being in columns at right angles to the length of the roll, so that a new column is disclosed as the left-hand vellum is unrolled and the right-hand vellum rolled up. This roll, which contains the divine message that Ezekiel is to impart, the prophet is bidden to eat. Here, as elsewhere (Rev. 10 : 9 ; Jer. 15 : 16), this is a symbol of prophetic inspiration. Just as food is taken into the body and becomes a part of it, so God's truth is to fill the entire being of God's teacher and preacher. And just as food, when eaten, expresses itself in characteristic individual words, looks, and deeds, so inspiration does not do away with individual peculiarities. The same Holy Spirit animates Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, but how varied are their utterances in method and manner!

Having eaten the roll, Ezekiel found it to be sweet as honey. Divine truth is always very dear to the one that accepts it. Later, however (Ezek. 3 : 14 ; compare Rev. 10 : 9, 10), when the message has to be delivered to hostile hearers, it proves to be bitter indeed. Thus Paul found the good news of salvation through Christ to be "foolishness" and "a stumblingblock" to those that denied it, but to Christians it was the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1 : 23, 24).

HARD TASKS TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED. "I do not say, 'Seek high things for yourself,' but if they seek you, never be afraid to face them. There is still grand work to do in God's world ; as good opportunity for noble life and service as ever in the hero-ages of the past. Live with the forward look and the upward look, and if some new glory of the Lord's service dawns on you don't fall down before it, but 'stand up on your feet' (v. 1) and face the light."— *Rev. Brooke Herford, D.D.*

No one need look beyond his home, his neighborhood, his church, and his town for tasks that will bring out all his resources. We have the same devils to fight that Ezekiel had, the same discouragements to meet, the same heavenly forces on our side.

Is there some one in your home that has not yet yielded his life to Christ? Is there a neglected set of boys or girls that you might form into a Sunday-school class? Is there a family of immigrants, poor, unfriended, ignorant of our language and ways? Are the political, social, and business standards of your town lamentably low? Has your church too small a congregation and a discouraged pastor? Each of these conditions is an Ezekiel call for you.

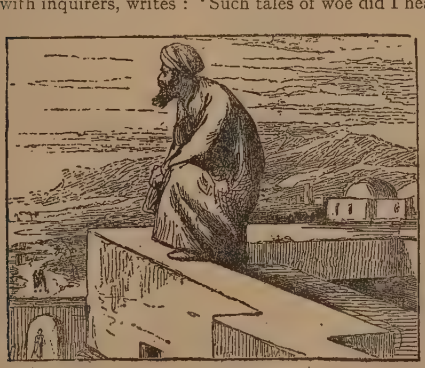
Ezek. 3 : 17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel : therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

II. **EZEKIEL ENTERS ON HIS WORK,** Ezek. 3 : 4–27. THE PROPHET SENT FORTH. Thus being filled with the truth he was to preach, Ezekiel was sent forth by the Almighty. He was not sent forth blindly, but the difficulties of his task were made plain to him. He was not to go to a strange nation, but to his own people, speaking his own tongue. If he had gone to a strange people, they would have understood him and heeded, Jehovah said, just as Christ declared that his miracles, if worked in Tyre and Sidon, would have led them to repent (Matt. 11 : 21, 23 ; Luke 10 : 13). But his own people, *God's* own people, Ezekiel was forewarned, would not hear and heed. Nevertheless the full truth was to be set before them faithfully.

BORNE TO TEL-ABIB. Thus far the prophet has been in the presence of Jehovah. Now a change of scene takes place. He is lifted up by the Spirit, as Philip was carried off after his conversation with the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8 : 39, 40) ; there was the swaying of the great wings and the whir of the mystic wheels, and Ezekiel felt himself set down, out of the realm of ecstatic vision, in the presence of the hard realities of his life work. He was among the Hebrew exiles. They were dwelling by the river Chebar, by which "one of the great Babylonian canals is doubtless intended. Hilprecht found mention of (*nâru*) *Kabaru*, one of these canals large enough to be navigable, to the east of Nippur, 'in the land of the Chaldeans.' This 'great canal' he identifies with the modern *shaṭṭ en-Nil*, in which probably we should recognize the ancient Chebar."— *Rev. William Ewing, D.D.* The city where the exiles were grouped was Tel-abib, which means "Hill of Barley-ears," probably a trading center, but it cannot now be identified.

A WATCHMAN TO ISRAEL. For seven days Ezekiel sat "overwhelmed" among the exiles. We are reminded of the Psalmist : "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down" (Ps. 137 : 1), of the Jerusalem elders sitting disconsolate in Lam. 2 : 10, and of the mournful week through which Job's friends sat with the stricken patriarch (Job 2 : 13) on the ground. Ezekiel was overwhelmed with a sense of the hard work ahead of him and the hopelessness of his task, and the seven days was a recognized period of mourning (Gen. 50 : 10). At the end of the seven days Ezekiel received a new revelation from the Lord.

Illustration. Ezekiel had to sit for a week among his people, learning their misery, before he was ready to preach to them. "Henry Drummond, after close contact with inquirers, writes : 'Such tales of woe did I hear that I felt I must go and change my very clothes after the contact. Oh, I am sick with the sins of men! How can God bear it?' Only in hospital wards does the student attain any adequate knowledge of disease."— *Rev. W. L. Watkinson, D.D.*



A Watchman on the Ramparts.

17. **Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.** In Ezek. 33 : 1–9 this comparison of the prophet to a watchman is fully set forth. As a watchman stands on a rampart and gives warning of an approaching foe, calling the troops to arms, so Ezekiel is to give warning to his nation of their enemies, their own sins, summoning them to the conflict against them. Compare Heb. 13 : 17.

18. **When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die.** From the beginning of the Word of God, Gen. 2 : 17, it is clearly stated that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6 : 23). Evil, persisted in, brings always the eternal death of the soul, and

18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life ; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thy hand.

19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity ; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die : because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered ; but his blood will I require at thy hand.

21. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning ; and thou hast delivered thy soul.

---

often also the death of the body. Ezekiel's business was to warn sinners of their doom, if they did not repent ; but if he should fail to warn any sinner, his failure would be no extenuation for the evil-doer. " He will perish in his sins," said Jehovah, **but his blood will I require at thy hand.** The Hebrew thought of life as residing in the blood (Gen. 9 : 4), so that this sentence means " His life will I require at thy hand."

19. On the other hand, Ezekiel is told that if he is faithful in warning the wicked, even if the sinner dies unrepentant Ezekiel's own soul would be clear, free from responsibility. **Thou hast delivered thy soul.** " Definite individual responsibility for moral character is here more plainly asserted than perhaps it had ever been before."— *Westminster Commentary.* Each is responsible for his own character, and at the same time responsible for whatever influence he can exert on the character of others.

20. So much for the wicked. Next Jehovah considers the case of a righteous man who turns into evil ways. **And I lay a stumblingblock before him.** The same thought is expressed in Jer. 6 : 21, and also, in a different form, in Isa. 6 : 9, 10. " I bring him to trial by placing difficulties and temptations in his way. It is true that God tempts no man in order to his destruction, but in the course of his providence he permits men to be tried in order that their faith may be approved, and in this trial some who seem to be righteous fall."— *Speaker's Commentary.* Such a man, if he die in his sins unwarned by Ezekiel, will not be saved on account of Ezekiel's failure. **His righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered.** The Jews believed that their good works were counted as merits by God, and were laid up " for a memorial before God " (Acts 10 : 4). Note how often Nehemiah asked God to hold in remembrance all the good he had done for his people (Neh. 5 : 19 ; 13 : 14, 22, 31). But sin, unrepented of, would destroy this store of good deeds, and blot out God's memory of them. Such a death will lie at Ezekiel's door, God warns the prophet, if he fails to give faithful warning.

21. If, on the contrary, Ezekiel shall preach faithfully the perils of sin, and righteous men, listening, avoid evil and keep on in their right ways, then they will live in God's favor. **And thou hast delivered thy soul.** In this commission the chief side of the work of a prophet is brought out. We think of prophets as those that foretell events, and that, to be sure, they sometimes did ; but more commonly, as here, they announced God's will and called upon men to obey it. They were not so much *fore*-tellers as *forth*-tellers. The modern preacher has inherited this side of the prophet's task. Sunday-school teachers, parents, friends, all Christians in the measure of their powers and opportunities, share it with the preacher.

THE SHEPHERD SERMON (Ezek. 34 : 11–16). For the Primary pupils, who might not be able to understand the lesson on Ezekiel assigned to the older grades, the Lesson Committee has selected a specimen of Ezekiel's sermons, that which compares God to a kind shepherd and God's people to sheep. It is a good illustration of Ezekiel's method, and so may come into the lesson scheme of all grades.

From Roller on the Catacombs.
Statue of the Good Shepherd.

The false leaders and rulers of the Jews are compared by Ezekiel to bad shepherds. As bad shepherds neglect their sheep, allowing them to wander off among the rocks and letting the wolves get among them to slay them, so these evil leaders allowed the Jews to wander off into idolatry, and to stray into ways that led to death. Thus God's sheep were scattered in the exile, were taken off into many lands and suffered terrible hardships.

But God, the true shepherd, says Ezekiel, will follow after his sheep. He will seek them in all these lands of their exile. He will bind up the limbs that have been broken among the rocks and apply soothing ointment to the gashes made by thorns. He will lead the worn and hungry sheep to green pastures and still waters. He will cause them to lie down there in peace and safety. It is a beautiful and practical illustration of the twenty-third Psalm, and a wonderful foreglimpse of the work which Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came to this world to do for all mankind.

This sermon of Ezekiel's on the Good Shepherd must have been a blessed consolation to those poor Jews, far from their homes, held as slaves in the land of their enemies. Ezekiel must often have been called upon to deliver it, and written copies of it, passed from hand to hand, must have been greatly prized.

THE BEGINNING OF EZEKIEL'S WORK. Once more (Ezek. 3 : 22–27) "the hand of the Lord" was laid upon the prophet, and a new vision of the glory of God was granted him. Then he was bidden to inaugurate his ministry in a strange way. He was told to remain in his house and maintain absolute silence for a time. During this period he was to preach by means of the symbolic actions described in Ezek. 4 : 1—5 : 4. He was to draw on a tile pictures of the siege of Jerusalem that was even then taking place. He was to lie on his left side for three hundred and ninety days, one day for each year of the wicked Northern Kingdom (counting apparently from the accession of Saul) ; and then he was to lie on his right side for forty days, each day representing a year of the evil kings of Judah. Finally, with a sharp sword he was to cut off his hair and beard, burning a third of it, cutting a third into bits with the sword, and scattering a third to the wind, taking only a few hairs and binding them in his garment. Thus he was to signify that only a few would survive the siege of Jerusalem and the exile. After these signs were completed, speech was restored to the prophet, and he began his long series of sermons. By these symbolic actions he must have advertised his mission, and won the absorbed attention of all the Jews to whatever message he had afterwards to communicate.

OUR DUTY TO WARN OTHERS. The insight that perceives an evil or a peril carries with it the duty to warn others. The first man who sees a mad dog, or the start of a fire, or a robber in the act, is under obligation to shout out his discovery. The same thing is true in such matters as school dishonesty, false claims for goods, misrepresentations in social life, the lies of infidels, the crafty intriguing of enemies of our country. We share in the guilt of all these if we know about them and hold our peace.

Every one has some Ezekiel work to do, some work of warning — the child in school, a parent with children, a man with his business associates, all of us with our friends and neighbors.

We have not Ezekiel's splendor of inspiration, but that does not free us from responsibility to use whatever lesser powers God has given us.

Our warning may be done in many ways — some with quiet conversation, some with public speech, some with letters, some in print, some through organizations. We are to use all the ways that are open to us.

Faithful warning often brings persecution. "A good man is an offence to a bad man. The sight of him is a sort of insult; and he is irritated at him, and does him what harm he can."— *John Henry Newman.* We must be willing to warn others even when they are ungrateful and hostile.

"Sport of the changeful multitude,
Nor calmly heard nor understood,
Their song has seemed a trick of art,
Their warnings but the actor's part.
With wounds, and scorn, and evil will,
The world requites its prophets still."
— *Whittier's "Ezekiel."*

And finally, if we are to be watchmen over others, none the less but all the more must every Christian watch over himself. "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Look to yourself. You have no enemy to fear but yourself. No one can hurt a hair of your head but yourself. Have you begun to watch what goes on in your own heart?"— *Alexander Whyte, D.D.*

LESSON II (28). — July 9.

DANIEL INTERPRETING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM. — Daniel 2.

PRINT vs. 36–45, 47.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.* — REV. 11 : 15.

Devotional Reading : Isa. 11 : 1–16.
Reference Material : Isa. 9 : 6, 7 ; 13 ; 14 ; 47 ; Dan. 4 : 30, 34–37 ; John 18 : 33–38 ; Rev. 11 : 15.
Primary Topic : HOW GOD ANSWERED DANIEL'S PRAYER.
Lesson Material : Dan. 2 : 1–3, 10–12, 25–28, 48.
Memory Verse : If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. 1 John 5 : 14.
Junior Topic : DANIEL REVEALS THE KING'S DREAM.
Memory Verse : Jas. 1 : 5.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : HOW DANIEL MET A SEVERE TEST.
Topic for Young People and Adults : GOD'S WORLD-KINGDOM : ITS NATURE AND PROGRESS.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in a figure of a man which one of the class may make in advance of the recitation, cutting it out of wood, or making it of any other material at hand. The head should be gilded, aluminum paint should be used for the silver, bronze paint for the bronze, and black paint for the iron, while light brown paint will be used for the clay. The main point to bring out for the children is that God will answer their prayers just as truly and often just as wonderfully as he answered the prayers of Daniel and his three friends.

The Older Classes will use the familiar story as the starting-point for a survey of Christ's world-kingdom. One of the class will describe the influence of the Christian nations, and another will sketch the splendid progress of modern missions. A third will speak of international peace and a fourth of international co-operation, as in the Postal Union. Some of the problems of the world-kingdom that may be discussed are these : How can we get enough men for missions? How can we get enough money to win the world for Christ? How are national pride and jealousies to be subdued? When may we expect the full coming of Christ's kingdom? How shall we know that it has come? Each of these problems may be treated by a different member of the class.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Daniel was carried into exile (Beecher) B. C. 605, and interpreted the king's dream B. C. 603.

Place. — Babylon, one of the world's greatest cities, situated on the River Euphrates.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The character and purpose of the book of Daniel.
The date of the book of Daniel.
Daniel's education in Babylonia.

A comparison between Daniel and Revelation.
A comparison between Daniel's and Joseph's dream-interpretation.
The course of history culminating in Christ's kingdom.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: How Daniel Met a Severe Test.

I. DANIEL: HIS EDUCATION AND HIS BOOK, Dan. 1.
Daniel early shows his character.
Outline and nature of the book of Daniel.

II. THE TEST THAT CONFRONTED DANIEL, vs. 1–16.
The great king Nebuchadnezzar.
The forgotten dream.
The dismayed magicians.
Daniel's confidence.
Our testing times.

III. HOW DANIEL MET THE TEST, vs. 17–49.
By co-operation.
By prayer.
By praise.
By honoring God.
The dream and the interpretation.
God's world-kingdom: its nature and problems.

THE LESSON IN ART.

"Daniel" by Michelangelo (Sistine Chapel, Rome), Burne-Jones, Sargent (Boston Public Library).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

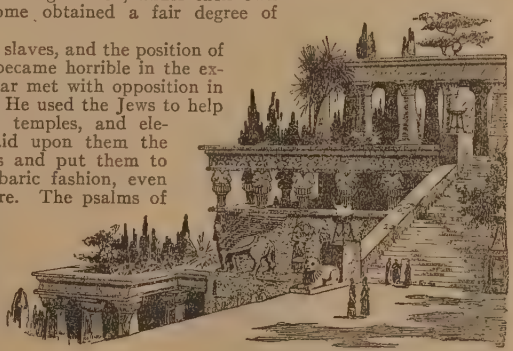
For the conservative view of Daniel see commentaries by Calvin, Moses Stuart, Keil, Strong, Fuller (*Speaker's Commentary*), Thomson (*Pulpit Commentary*), and Wright (*Daniel and His Critics*). See also Pusey's *Daniel the Prophet*, Wright's *Daniel and His Critics*, Kennedy's *The Book of Daniel from the Christian Standpoint*, Wilson's *Daniel*, Anderson's *Daniel in the Critics' Den*, Orr's *The Problem of the Old Testament*. For the radical view see Driver's *Literature of the Old Testament* and his *Daniel* (in *Cambridge Bible*), Charles in *The New Century Bible*, Hunter in *The Age of Daniel* (*Temple Bible Characters*), Bevan's *The Book of Daniel*, Cornill's *Introduction to the Old Testament*. For an excellent summary of the conservative viewpoint see "Daniel" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; for the opposing view see Hastings's *Bible Dictionary* and *The Encyclopædia Biblica*. On the immediate lesson see Macmillan's *The Olive Leaf*, Coyle's *The Imperial Christ*, Morrison's *The Footsteps of the Flock*, Phelps's *Studies of the Old Testament*.

I. DANIEL: HIS EDUCATION AND HIS BOOK. Daniel 1. *Daniel's name* means "God is my judge." Other Daniels are the second son of David (and Abigail), and a priest who returned to Judæa with Ezra.

Daniel was born in Judah, of a noble and perhaps the royal family (Dan. 1 : 3), and was among those taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, B. C. 605 (Beecher), eight years before the deportation of Ezekiel. He was probably from twelve to fifteen years old when taken to Babylonia.

THE LOT OF THE EXILES. This was at first quite endurable. They seem to have had their own lands assigned them for settlement, and their own houses to live in. Their communities were self-governed, under their own rulers and leaders. Some obtained a fair degree of wealth.

Many, however, were slaves, and the position of these slaves gradually became horrible in the extreme as Nebuchadnezzar met with opposition in his siege of Jerusalem. He used the Jews to help build his vast palaces, temples, and elevated gardens. He laid upon them the most cruel punishments and put them to death in the most barbaric fashion, even roasting them in the fire. The psalms of this period are passionate with fierce indignation, and thrill with longings for the dear home-land. At first they felt that God had forgotten them, and gave themselves up to cynicism and idolatry. Gradually the earnest teachings of Ezekiel brought them back to God, and the exiles, in profound repentance, returned to their ancient allegiance to Jehovah.



From an old print.

Hanging Garden of Babylon.

The position of Daniel in Babylon was a fortunate one, for Nebuchadnezzar had ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his eunuchs and the master of his harem, to select a number of the Jewish youths of noble and royal blood, and train them to be king's officers; and Daniel was of this number. Foreigners and slaves were often chosen

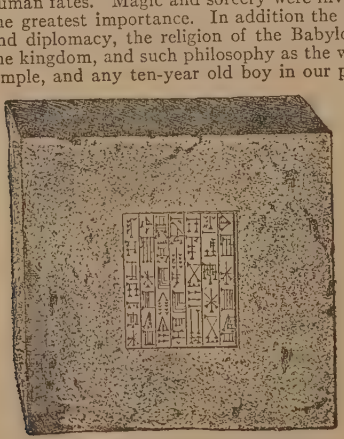
for such a purpose, as they would be more thoroughly in the king's power and more obedient tools in his hand.

We are told that the lads thus selected were to be without physical blemish, fair to look upon, and with bright minds. Thus we have a most attractive picture of the young Daniel.

These boys were to be so trained that they should forget their native language and customs, and became Chaldeans in mind and heart. To that end their names, into which the Jew put so much of his history and his faith, were changed to heathen names. Daniel became Belteshazzar, "Protect his life!" probably elliptical for "Bel, protect his life!" a prayer to the Babylonian deity. Daniel's three friends, selected with him for special training, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, all had names compounded with Jah or El — the Hebrew's God; but they also received new names compounded with the names of heathen Gods, Shadrach ("The command of Aku," the moon-god), Meshach ("Who is what Aku is?"), and Abed-nego ("Servant of Nebo," the god whose name appears in "Nebuchadnezzar").

DANIEL SHOWS HIS CHARACTER. While these four youths were being trained for their important posts, rich food and wine were placed before them daily, brought from the king's own table. But Daniel and his companions strenuously objected to this. The food was probably not prepared with the care which the Jewish religion wisely required, and very likely the meat had been consecrated to some of the heathen gods. Therefore Daniel and his friends begged Ashpenaz, the chief of the eunuchs, to feed them on simpler food. Daniel's winsome ways had already won the heart of Ashpenaz, but he did not dare oppose the king's orders. His subordinate, however, who may have been the steward, was persuaded to give the plan a ten-day trial. Daniel and his three friends during those ten days kept away from the rich food, the meat and wine from the king's table, and lived on a vegetable diet. "The youths are supplied with the meagre and unappetizing fare of the common people,— dried fruit, dates, melons, vegetables of various kinds, whose plentifulness made them cheap, and whose simplicity made them wholesome." — *Rev. A. Mitchell Hunter.* The result was a triumph for temperance. Daniel and his three friends were seen to be fairer in face than the other youths who were being trained with them, and their bodies were plumper, a characteristic much prized by Orientals. From that time they were allowed to have their way in the matter of their food, obeying their consciences and the dictates of sound sense.

DANIEL'S EDUCATION IN BABYLON. Daniel and his three friends were taught all the learning of their day. This included some crude astronomy which was chiefly the superstitions of astrology, the assumed influences of the planets and stars on human fates. Magic and sorcery were involved in this study, which was regarded of the greatest importance. In addition the youths were taught the laws of statecraft and diplomacy, the religion of the Babylonians and their mythology, the history of the kingdom, and such philosophy as the wise men had thought out. It was all very simple, and any ten-year old boy in our public schools knows far more than all the Chaldean sages could impart; but it was elaborate in its simplicity, with an abundance of petty details. At the end of three years the four Hebrew youths were found to be ten times wiser even than their teachers, and were at once placed in confidential posts, in immediate attendance on the great king Nebuchadnezzar.



Brick Bearing the Name of Nebuchadnezzar.
British Museum. About 14 inches square.

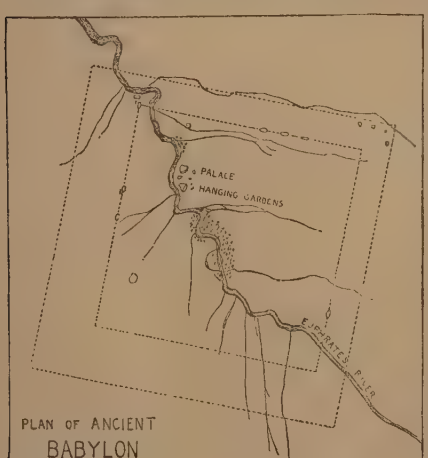
"The first chapter of Daniel serves as a keynote of soft, simple, and delightful music by way of overture. It calms us for the contemplation of the awful and tumultuous scenes that are now in succession to be brought before us." — *F. W. Farrar.*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL. The twelve chapters of the book of Daniel are divided into two parts. The first six chapters are narratives of the experiences through which Daniel and his three friends passed,

testing experiences in which they proved heroically true to their consciences and their God. The last six chapters relate Daniel's visions of the future, in which, with the use of many symbols, the course of coming events in the history of the nations is set forth, especially showing that God will watch over and protect his people.

There are two views of this book. One is the radical view, which holds that the book, though based on a historical character, is largely fiction, written four centuries after the time when Daniel is said to have lived, and designed to encourage the Jews contemporary with the author, who were being terribly persecuted by their Greek ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes. This view regards the book as written between B. C. 168 and 165. Briefly summarized, the chief grounds on which this belief rests are : (1) that in the Hebrew Bible the book is not placed among the Prophets but in the miscellaneous collection that follows the Prophets ; (2) that Jesus, the son of Sirach (writing about B. C. 180), mentions in his list of famous Israelites Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets, but not Daniel ; (3) that Darius the Mede cannot be placed in the list of Babylonian kings ; (4) that the book contains Persian, Greek, and later Hebrew words that could not have been used in the time of Daniel ; (5) that the theology of the book, especially in relation to the future kingdom of God, the resurrection, angels, and the judgment, is too developed for the time of Daniel ; (6) that the prophecies of the book are remarkably definite and accurate down to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and then at once become vague.

On the other hand, the conservative view is that the book of Daniel is an accurate, inspired account of historic events, written by Daniel or by some one near to his time. In support of this view it is argued : (1) that, with the exception of a Greek non-Christian philosopher of the third century A. D., no one denied the genuineness of the book of Daniel till the seventeenth century ; (2) that Daniel is not placed in the Hebrew book of the Prophets because he is not called a "prophet" but a "seer" or "wise man" ; (3) that the Hebrew of Daniel is almost exactly the same as that of Ezra, both containing many Babylonian and Persian words ; (4) that the Greek words found in Daniel might easily have entered the book through Greek captives which are known to have been taken and the use of Greek musical instruments and the like ; (5) that Jesus, the son of Sirach, names Simon, the high priest, among the greatest of Israel's great men, though he is not named in the Bible, and it is impossible to see how the account of Daniel could have been written and accepted as true between the time when ben Sirach wrote (180 B. C.) and 169 B. C., when (see the first book of the Maccabees) Daniel is referred to as a historical book ; (6) that Darius the Mede was a son of Xerxes who was king or governor of Chaldea during the reign of Cyrus ; (7) that the doctrines of Daniel are developed from those of early Hebrew literature ; (8) that both in doctrine and in prophecy we are dealing with a revelation from God, which is accepted by those that believe in the possibility of such revelations without attempting to explain all features of it in conformity with merely naturalistic theories of the Bible and of life.



PLAN OF ANCIENT BABYLON

II. **THE TEST THAT CONFRONTED DANIEL,** vs. 1–16. THE GREAT KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Babylonia, the fertile region between the southern Euphrates and Tigris, was a powerful nation in the time of Abraham. After a few centuries it was conquered by its own colony to the north, Assyria, and was ruled from Nineveh for five centuries. King Nabopalossar at length re-established it, and fifty years later King Nabu-Kudur-usur, the Nebuchadnezzar of the Bible, made it the chief nation on earth.

Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon

on a vast scale, making it in some respects the most splendid city the world has ever seen. In the battle of Carchemish (B. C. 605) he defeated Egypt, and compelled it to leave Syria. He overcame Judah, overthrew Jerusalem, and deported to Babylonia the chief people of the land, the rulers, artisans, warriors, priests. His drag-net brought men from many lands, all of whom he compelled to build and enrich his marvelous capital. Such was the monarch whom Daniel was to serve.

THE FORGOTTEN DREAM. We get a glimpse of the despotic and unreasonable character of the Babylonian king in the incident of his forgotten dream. Two years after his accession he had a remarkable dream, which, on awaking, he tried in vain to remember. Thereupon he called his wise men, and demanded that they tell him the dream. The wise men properly demurred. "What was your majesty's dream?" they asked respectfully. "Tell us and we will interpret it." But the king demanded that they should both tell the dream and explain it. If they did this, he would reward them richly. If they failed, he would cut them in pieces, and disgrace their dead bodies by casting them out on dunghills. Nebuchadnezzar was a typical Eastern tyrant.

THE DISMAYED MAGICIANS. No wonder the wise men were filled with dismay. Nebuchadnezzar was furious, and had given orders that all the wise men of Babylon should be slain, all the magicians, enchanters, diviners, soothsayers, sorcerers, "Chaldeans," — the whole tribe of men whose mysterious claims to supernatural knowledge had laid them open to the king's demand and threat. In their extremity, as the time for the execution of the king's decree drew near, they sought Daniel, who was evidently admitted by the wise men themselves to be wiser than they were, and begged him to come to their aid.

DANIEL'S CONFIDENCE. We are reminded of the story of Pharaoh's dream which Joseph interpreted, though all the wise men of Egypt failed to do so (Gen. 41). Both Joseph and Daniel were confident of their ability, but Joseph rested his confidence on God (Gen. 41 : 16), and so, it will be seen, did Daniel. He and his companions were involved in the wholesale slaughter decreed by the wrathful king, but he obtained a stay of execution from the captain of the king's guard, who had already set about the arrests.

OUR TESTING TIMES. "*Credo quia impossibile* — I believe because it is impossible — said one of the stout old Fathers of the Church; and the faith of Daniel flamed into noontide glory when all his masters pronounced the thing impossible." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.* "A Christian," it has been well said, "is a man who attempts impossibilities." The harder the task set him by God, the surer he is to succeed, because the harder will he be driven back upon the unfailing help of God.

Such testing times as came to Daniel come to all of us, times when we are confronted with tasks too hard for us. Such tests do more for us than all our easy times. They bring out the best in us. They lead us to the true source of power. They make our religion real.

III. **HOW DANIEL MET THE TEST,** vs. 17–49. BY CO-OPERATION. It is to be noted that Daniel did not try to meet his great test alone. Friendship was for just such a time as this. Five heads were wiser than one. He called a prayer meeting. Christians that try to live strong lives and conquer their temptations without the help of other Christians are sure at some time to fail and fall. If even our Lord felt it necessary to associate twelve friends with him to help him in his task, how much more do we need the same upholding!

BY PRAYER. Using their Hebrew names and not their new heathen names, Daniel begged his friends to pray for God's merciful enlightenment to save their lives. We are told simply and immediately that the king's vision and its meaning were at once revealed to Daniel in a dream that very night. That ancient prayer meeting, held so long before God's teaching in regard to prayer had been disclosed to the world, met with a prompt and glorious blessing. How many such prayers have since been rewarded!

"There are noble Christian workers,
The men of faith and power,
The overcoming wrestlers
Of many a midnight hour;
Prevailing princes with their God
Who will not be denied,
Who bring down showers of blessing
To swell the rising tide.
The Prince of Darkness quaileth
At their triumphant way,
Their fervent prayer availeth
To sap his subtle sway."
— *Frances Ridley Havergal.*

BY PRAISE. Prayer and praise are closly linked together in the believer's life. As soon as Daniel knew his prayer to be answered, he could not help a rush of tuneful

36. This is the dream ; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

37. Thou, O king, art king of kings, unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory ;

---

thanksgiving. His psalm of praise has come down to us. It is poetry, and should be so printed, as by Deane:

> "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever ;
> For wisdom and might are his.
> And he changeth the times and the seasons ;
> He removeth kings, and setteth up kings ;
> He giveth wisdom unto the wise,
> And knowledge to them that have understanding ;
> He revealeth the deep and secret things ;
> He knoweth what is in the darkness,
> And the light dwelleth with him.
> I thank thee and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers,
> Who hast given me wisdom and might,
> And hast now made known unto me what we desired of the
> For thou hast made known unto us the king's matter."

'We have here a model of the highest form of worship — a prayer which is wholly adoration and thanksgiving." — *Prof. W. F. Adeney.*

BY HONORING GOD. "Nebuchadnezzar was the first of the great imperial powers who ruled after Israel ceased to be so much a nation as a faith." — *Pulpit Commentary.* It was most suitable that at the outset of this new order of things the Hebrew faith should be proclaimed boldly before this great heathen king,— a king who, as his inscriptions show, was religiously inclined, according to his heathen lights. Nothing is clearer than Daniel's denial of any wisdom in himself, his pointing out the impotence of the heathen sages, and his declaration of the wisdom and power of Jehovah, the "God in heaven that revealeth secrets" (vs. 27–30). Those that honor God, as Daniel honored him, will God honor.

Babylonian Household Image from Bismya. Recently Discovered.

THE DREAM AND THE INTERPRETATION. The dream which Daniel brought back to the king's mind was one of the most famous dreams of all history. "It was such as might well float into the king's busy brain. It conforms to the psychological law of dreams, according to which they invariably recombine images and impressions already imprinted upon the waking mind. Its imagery might readily be suggested by the colossal figures in which Babylonian and Assyrian art revelled." — *Rev. A. Mitchell Hunter.* The king had seen "a single image of colossal size standing before him. It was at the same time both magnificent and awful to behold. The head was of finest gold ; the breast and arms of silver ; the belly and thighs of brass ; the legs of iron ; the feet part of iron and part of clay. The very first thing that must have struck the king as the form of the image was brought before him was the instability of it. Here was gold, the heaviest substance, forming the head, while clay, the lightest, formed the base or feet of the image. And he must have been struck also by the decrease in the value of the materials of the image, reckoning from the head downwards. At the top was the most precious of metals, gold ; at the bottom the most common, that which might have been found in the richest abundance anywhere in the large plains of Babylonia." — *Deane.* Finally, a great stone, cut without human agency from some invisible mountain, fell on the image, which immediately collapsed and crumbled to dust which the wind blew away, while the stone became a vast mountain which filled the entire world.

36. **This is the dream ; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.** It was a striking dream, but a far more marvelous interpretation, one which without divine revelation would never have occurred to Daniel's mind.

37. **Thou, O king, art king of kings.** This was simple fact and not flattery : Nebuchadnezzar was sovereign over many lesser kingdoms. **Unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom.** "The God of heaven" is a favorite expression of

38. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all : thou art the head of gold.

39. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee ; and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things ; and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush.

41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom ; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

43. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men ; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay.

Ezra and Nehemiah. By the term is meant Jehovah, who alone could have given Nebuchadnezzar his vast dominions. **The power, and the strength, and the glory.** The writer of this book is fond of heaping up words, a characteristic which adds a strange grandeur and magnificence to his style.

38. **And wheresoever the children of men dwell.** The geographical knowledge of the day was, of course, very limited ; little was known of the great tribes in China, Central Africa, and northern Europe, and of course nothing was known of the inhabitants of America. **The beasts of the field and birds of the heavens hath he given into thy hand.** If even the beasts and the birds were subject to Nebuchadnezzar, how much more the men ! **Thou art the head of gold.** This head of the image represented the Babylonian kingdom with its successive rulers, of whom Nebuchadnezzar was by far the most brilliant and powerful.

39. **And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee,** therefore represented by the silver breast and arms. This was the kingdom of Media, north of Babylonia, which conquered Babylonia, but did not rule with so great power and splendor ; or, more likely, it was the Medo-Persian empire, with its great kings, Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes. **And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.** Some regard this as the Persian empire, others as the Græco-Macedonian empire, including the world-conqueror Alexander. This was symbolized by the middle parts of the image, made of brass, probably what we call bronze,— an alloy of copper and tin,— brass being an alloy of copper and zinc. Most ancient arms were made of bronze.

40. **And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron.** The iron legs of the image represented the Macedonian empire, or, if that was the third kingdom, then the Roman empire ; " the former view being held commonly by those who hold to the composition of Daniel in the second century B. C., and the latter by those who hold to the traditional view that it was written in the sixth century B. C." — *Prof. R. D. Wilson.* " The mere fact that there is a difference of opinion regarding these four kingdoms makes it impossible to dogmatize. And we must not be so hampered with details as to overlook the trend of teaching involved in them, which is the same in whatever way they may be settled." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.* **Forasmuch as iron braketh in pieces and subdueth all things.** Iron can crush bronze, silver, or gold. Certainly in its crushing power the Roman empire was superior to the Macedonian.

41. **And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron.** These represent not a new kingdom, but the continuation of the fourth kingdom, whatever that was. **It shall be a divided kingdom.** If the fourth kingdom was the Macedonian, the toes represent the division of Alexander's empire among his successors, and (perhaps) the marriage of these successors (the Seleucidæ) with the Ptolemies (the clay). If the fourth kingdom was the Roman, the reference is to " the intrusion into the Roman empire of the Germanic tribes on the one side and of the Arabs and Turks on the other " (*Pulpit Commentary*), and the division of the Roman empire into the separate nations of Europe.

44. And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people ; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

45. Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold ; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter : and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

47. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou hast been able to reveal this secret.

---

44. **And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.** This shall take place in the days of the separation of the fourth kingdom, however we may interpret that. **Which shall never be destroyed.** Thus it is different from all the world-kingdoms that have preceded it. **Nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people,** as each of the world kingdoms has passed its sovereignty along to a different branch of the human race. **But it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms,** just as each of them destroyed its predecessor.

45. **Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands.** In the Babylonian empire the king was the state, represented by gold ; in the Persian the nobles ruled, represented by silver ; in the Greek the free citizens ruled, represented by bronze ; in the Roman the soldiers were in control, the iron. Now we come to a substance still inferior — to common stone. The Messiah's kingdom is to be made up of the lowly, of the poor, of slaves, of common working people, of the unlearned and obscure. But God is the author of the kingdom,— it is cut out without the hands of men,— and he can make stone more valuable than gold and more powerful than iron. **And that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold.** The head of gold broken last, perhaps out of compliment to Nebuchadnezzar ! — but broken to pieces nevertheless. **The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter.** Daniel could not have predicted that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom should pass away without being convicted of treason ; but this was the king's own dream — quite a difference ! **And the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof true.** Nebuchadnezzar would own that Daniel had brought to his memory the very dream he had dreamed ; therefore his interpretation could also be trusted.

47. **The king answered unto Daniel, and said.** First falling down before him in superstitious reverence (v. 46), and ordering a drink-offering poured out before him as if he were a god. Daniel seems to have understood these honors to be paid to God, whose representative he was, otherwise he would have protested, as Paul did on a similar occasion (Acts 14 : 13-18). **Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings.** This acknowledgment of Nebuchadnezzar's shows in what sense he had been bowing before Daniel. **And a revealer of secrets.** That is just what Daniel had said that his God was (v. 28) ; now he had proved it.

HOW DANIEL WAS HONORED. Acting after the impulsive fashion of an Eastern despot, Nebuchadnezzar at once heaped presents upon Daniel and promoted him to be governor of the principal province of the empire, in which Babylon was situated. Moreover, though each clan of wise men had its own chief (Driver), he made Daniel the chief over all these chiefs. If they were as grateful to him for saving their lives as they should have been, they gladly learned of this appointment. Further, on Daniel's request his three friends were made his assistants in ruling the province, but Daniel remained in court, in immediate attendance on the great king.

GOD'S WORLD-KINGDOM. God has a purpose in human history. "Through the ages one eternal purpose runs."— *Tennyson.* History is not aimless, inconsistent, but "all things work together for good" to God's children. This was the lesson of the book of Daniel to its first readers, and it is its chief lesson to us.

The Fifth Kingdom that shall never end was inaugurated when Jesus Christ came to earth. "Of his kingdom there shall be no end," said the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1 : 33). No other kingdom has been set up "without hands," based on the most

lowly and common elements of society, yet coming to hold sway over the most exalted.

"The supernatural is in exercise now in the events of the world." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.* In a wonderful way God has made all the greatest nations of the world Christian, and has given them ever-increasing wealth, power, and influence. The destiny of mankind is in their hands. The stone is filling the whole earth

Dr. Hugh Macmillan calls attention to the smallness of the stone compared with the huge bulk of the statue: Christianity grows always from tiny beginnings, such as the Twelve Apostles, the first Sunday school and Y. M. C. A., the Haystack Prayer Meeting, Carey's cobbler shop. Note also that the statue was limited in size, but the stone grew. Heathen religions are stagnant, stationary, but Christianity has in it the principle of expansion. "In Him all the building . . . *groweth*" (Eph. 2 : 21).

"Christianity, whenever it has been true to itself, has been an imperial movement. It has aimed at, and can consistently aim at, nothing short of world-conquest." — *Rev. John P. Coyle, D.D.* "Into all the world" is its marching order. Its missionaries fill all lands, speak all languages, and are winning men by whole districts in the greatest empires, such as China and India.

"It is a privilege — is it not? — to be a member of the Church of Christ; to constitute one of this mighty and immortal host; to bear the name which it bears; to be identified with its work, and to share its rewards. What has life to offer to a good man of lofty aspirations which can bear comparison with this? I never think of a child of God outside of the Church of Christ but with feelings of unutterable compassion." — *Prof. Austin Phelps, D.D.*

LESSON III (29). — July 16.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL. — Daniel 5 : 1–31.

TEMPERANCE LESSON. PRINT vs. 17–28.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* — ECCL. 12 : 14.

Devotional Reading : Isa. 35.
Reference Material : Gen. 19 : 1–28; Ex. 14 : 21–31; Ezek. 31 : 1–14; Acts 12 : 20–23.
Primary Topic : DANIEL TELLS THE KING OF HIS WRONG-DOING.
Lesson Material : Dan. 5 : 1–17, 24–31. Print vs. 5–9, 17, 25–29.
Memory Verse : Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Rom 12 : 9.
Junior Topic : BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST AND FATE.
Memory Verse : Eccl. 12 : 14.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : JUDGMENT AGAINST KING ALCOHOL.
Topic for Young People and Adults : HOW TO ENFORCE THE JUDGMENT AGAINST STRONG DRINK.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes — all but the very youngest — would be interested in the reading of extracts from the closing chapters of William Stearns Davis's *Belshazzar* or Earl Williams's *The Court of Belshazzar*, both of which give very vivid descriptions of the feast, the writing on the wall, and the capture of Babylon. Show the children that they can be proud as any king, and that pride always brings sorrow and loss. Be sure to teach the temperance lesson, telling them how strong drink destroys men's minds and souls.

The Older Classes will review the familiar story, perhaps through the reading of some story-account written by a member of the class in the character of one of the Babylonian sages who could not read the inscription, or perhaps in the character of one of Daniel's three friends. Spend little time in discussing the mooted questions of the places in history of Belshazzar and Darius the Mede. Take a plenty of time for a discussion of the aspects of the prohibition question uppermost at the time, appointing members of the class to lead the discussion on different points.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — B. C. 539 according to Professor Beecher, who thinks that Gobryas captured Babylon in July and Cyrus occupied the city in October.

Place. — Babylon, the great city on

the lower Euphrates, the capital of the Babylonian Empire.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The place of Belshazzar in history.
The place in history of Darius the Mede.
Bible teachings regarding pride and humility.
Famous banquet scenes in the Bible.
"Wise men" in the book of Daniel and elsewhere in the Bible.
The extent and power of the Babylonian Empire.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Handwriting on the Wall and Its Teachings.

I. THE PROBLEM OF THE MYSTERIOUS WRITING, VS. 1–16.
Belshazzar the king.
A drunken feast and its end.
The puzzled sages and the wise queen.
Finding our true helpers.

II. A LESSON IN HUMILITY, VS. 17–24.
Daniel's independence.
Daniel's bold truth-telling.
The fundamental virtue of humility.

III. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WRITING, VS. 25–31.
Numbered, weighed, wanting.
The prophecy fulfilled.
The judgment against King Alcohol and its enforcement.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Articles on Belshazzar and Darius the Mede in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Hastings's *Bible Dictionary*, and *The Encyclopædia Biblica*. Pinches, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*. W. W. Wright, *Daniel and His Prophecies* and *Daniel and His Critics*. Chapters in Phelps's *Studies of the Old Testament*, Talmage's *Sermons, First and Second Series*, Farrar's *In the Days of Thy Youth*, Hasell's *Bible Partings*, Bushnell's *Sermons on Living Subjects*, Macmillan's *Gleanings in Holy Fields*, Bradlee's *Sermons for the Church*, Burrell's "*For Christ's Crown*," Lee's *Eventful Nights in Bible History*, Moody's *Bible Characters* and *Great Joy*, Morrison's *The Weaving of Glory*, Goodell's *Pathways to the Best*. Poems by Newton (*Olney Hymns*), W. H. Roberts, Edwin Arnold, and Heine. Stories by William Stearns Davis (*Belshazzar*), Earl Williams (*The Court of Belshazzar*), Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Herbert D. Ward (*The Master of the Magicians* — introducing Nebuchadnezzar's madness). For a strong summary of the gains under the Prohibition Amendment see the *Scientific Temperance Journal* for September, 1920.

I. **THE PROBLEM OF THE MYSTERIOUS WRITING**, VS. 1–16. BELSHAZZAR THE KING. For a long time the radical critics held that King Belshazzar was mythical. Inscriptions have been found, however, which show that the last king of Babylonia, Nabunaid (Nabonidus), had a son called Belshazzar (meaning "May Bel protect the king"). He is seen as a man of wealth in Babylon, dealing in wool, renting houses, and lending money. A tender prayer for his welfare was inscribed on one tablet by his father. No king of the Babylonian Empire named Belshazzar is known to history, but it seems altogether likely that, Nabonidus ruling the entire country, Belshazzar was king under him of the province of Babylon and perhaps of other southern provinces. Belshazzar had a brother, named after his father, who was probably at the same time king at Haran far to the west.

The King.
Assyrian Monuments.

A DRUNKEN FEAST AND ITS END. "The account of Belshazzar's last banquet is one of the most graphic descriptions that are found in the whole Scriptures. He was evidently a young prince of debased habits, and not over-attentive to the affairs of the state. Circumstances, however, made it necessary for him to hold a levy, at which a thousand of his lords attended. A banquet followed. The king sat by himself at a separate table, apart from the magnates and princes who did him homage. He 'tasted' the wine before the assembled multitudes, and while at the height of his enjoyment ordered the sacred vessels of Jehovah to be brought forth from the temple of his god into the banqueting-hall." — *Deane.*

These golden vessels, brought by Belshazzar's predecessor ("father"), Nebuchadnezzar, from Jerusalem, were precious with many holy associations, but Belshazzar,

in his drunken frenzy, did not hesitate to debase them to most unholy uses. Filling them with wine, he passed them around among his tipsy guests, and with roars of merriment they drank to their bloody and indecent heathen deities. Drunkenness and profanity go together.

Illustration. "There is an old fable which tells of a man who had the choice which of three sins he would commit — drunkenness, adultery, or murder. He chose drunkenness as being apparently the least; but when he was intoxicated he committed both the others. Who shall reckon up the number of crimes committed under the influence of strong drink? crimes from the very thought of which the individuals who perpetrated them would in their sober senses have shrunk back appalled." — *William M. Taylor.*

"In the monarch's cheeks a wild fire glowed,
And the wine awoke his daring mood;
"And onward still by his madness spurred,
He blasphemes the Lord with a sinful word;
"And he brazenly boasts, blaspheming wild,
While the servile courtiers cheered and smiled.
"With daring hand in his frenzy grim,
The king seized a beaker and filled to the brim,
"And drained to the dregs the sacred cup,
And foaming he cried as he drank it up,
"'Jehovah, eternal scorn I own
To thee. I am monarch of Babylon.'"
— *Heinrich Heine.*

"It was the inspiration of a mind essentially profane, to propose the prostitution of consecrated vessels to the vile uses of a drunkard's orgy. It argued a radically blasphemous heart. Soon the reeling guests, led by the king, are quaffing deep out of the holy cups with shouts of scurrilous merriment and rowdy acclamation of their own leering gods. Belshazzar, well pleased, has thrown himself back on the cushions of his couch. His eyes, rolling in the wildness of excited intoxication, are suddenly caught and fixed by a sight at which his fevered heart stands still. Just above him a hand appears, dreadfully impersonal, yet instinct with life. The fingers curve themselves as though holding a stylus, and slowly begin to write upon that part of the whitened wall which was thrown into strong illumination by the golden candlesticks beside him. With an awestricken fascination he follows the ghostly hand till, having finished its task, it disappears." — *Rev. A. Mitchell Hunter.*

"There cometh forth a hand upon the stone,
Graving the symbols of a speech unknown;
Fingers like mortal fingers — leaving there
The blank wall flashing characters of fear —
And still it glideth silently and slow,
And still beneath the spectral letters glow —
Now the scroll endeth — now the seal is set —
The hand is gone — the record tarries yet." — *Edwin Arnold.*

The Handwriting on the Wall.

THE PUZZLED SAGES AND THE WISE QUEEN. The king grew pale and shook in his terror. Hastily he summoned his whole tribe of soothsayers and wise men, and promised that whoever should interpret the mysterious writing should rank third in the kingdom (or be one of the three chief rulers of the kingdom — the expression is not clear). But they failed the king, as they had failed before, and Belshazzar and his lords were at a loss.

The king had turned in the wrong direction for his helpers, just as so many do to-day. Young men and women that go wrong and make failures of their lives will be found quite uniformly to have chosen bad associates, evil advisers. They have been misled by bold pretences, by a parade of knowledge and experience, by a surface smartness. They have gone to the wrong books as well as persons, and to debasing places of amusement. They have had nothing to lean upon in time of trouble.

17. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another ; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

18. O thou king, the Most High God gave Nĕb-ū-chăd-nĕz'-zär thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty :

19. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him : whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive ; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down.

But there was a wise woman in the palace, the queen-mother (not the wife of Belshazzar, for his wives were already in the banqueting-hall ; see verse 2). The king's distress was known throughout the palace, and the queen went immediately to the banqueting-hall. Evidently Belshazzar had never heard of Daniel — which shows plainly what kind of man the king was ; but his mother knew all about him, and how he had told Nebuchadnezzar both his dream and its meaning, when all the wise men of the kingdom were utterly at a loss. So the king had Daniel brought post-haste, received him flatteringly, and offered him, if he would read the strange writing, a robe of royal purple, a chain of gold for his neck, and that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

FINDING OUR TRUE HELPERS. Our success or failure in life is a matter of the choice of friends and helpers — the right associates, the right partners, the right books and papers, the right teachers, the right husband or wife. Yet how often we allow chance to determine all these for us !

Very little of our lives is original. The greater part is taken, consciously or unconsciously, from those around us. Have we allied ourselves with " enchanters," or with Daniel ?

But our " helpers " soon narrow down to our Helper. The help that Christ gives is infinitely greater than any help from men. We can get that help only through trusting obedience such as Daniel showed. " If he is going to lead men to the heights, he sometimes begins by leading men to the depths." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.* All ways are blessed ways, if our Helper is with us.

" Have you never longed to open your whole heart to some friend who could help you in difficulties and trials — father, or mother, or elder brother, or teacher ? But the very best of men cannot help you as your Friend and Saviour can ; and what an opportunity, then, every prayer you utter as you clasp his feet ! " — *F. W. Farrar.*

" Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, and you will assuredly find that, in being joined to the RIGHT you are joined eternally to him, and walking with him in the blessed daylight of his truth." — *Horace Bushnell.*

II. **A LESSON IN HUMILITY,** vs. 17–24. 17. **Then Daniel answered and said before the king.** " To speak *before* rather than *to* a king is the language of respect." — *Cambridge Bible.* **Let thy gifts be to thyself.** " Daniel refused the king's offer of reward at first, but afterwards (verse 29) accepted it. In this way he showed his determination to speak the truth without any respect to fee, gift, or reward. Compare the conduct of Elisha, 2 Kings 5 : 16 ; 8 : 9." — *Ellicott.* **And give thy rewards to another.** " Daniel has no reverential preface, no softening of his message. His words are as if cut with steel on the rock." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **Nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king.** " The reader should remember that the remarkable visions vouchsafed to Daniel during the three years of Belshazzar's reign (Dan. 7, 8) had already taken place. It was no egotism but actual knowledge — granted to him by God — which enabled him to answer so fearlessly, 'I will make known the interpretation.' " — *Speaker's Commentary.*

18. **The Most High God.** All around Daniel were " gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone " (verse 23). Daniel knew the One and Only Deity, and did not hesitate to proclaim his unique pre-eminence. **Gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty.** These heaped-up words of splendor are an echo of Dan. 4 : 22, 36. Nebuchadnezzar is called Belshazzar's father as being " the greatest of his predecessors, just as Omri is called by the Assyrians the father of Jehu." — *Prof. R. Dick Wilson.*

19. **All the peoples . . . feared before him.** This verse presents a striking picture of an arbitrary ruler, an Eastern despot, acting as if he were God and accountable to

20. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him :

21. And he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses ; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven ; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will.

22. And thou his son, O Bĕl-shăz'-zär, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this,

23. But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven ; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them ; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know ; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.

---

no one, slaying or preserving, degrading or promoting, whom he would, and causing every one to tremble for fear of what he might do next. From such a rule our religion has saved us, bringing in justice, safety, democracy, and freedom.

20. **But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly.** "The terrible influence of power in the hands of depraved men, reacting on the heart, has rarely been portrayed more justly. The perpetual incense of flattery, coupled with the daily experience of being dependent on no one and of having every one dependent on himself, tempts an absolute monarch to feel himself almost a god. Under such influences the moral sensibilities become fearfully hardened against all sense of obligation whether to God or to man." — *Rev. Henry Cowles, D.D.* **He was deposed from his kingly throne.** Under dramatic circumstances described in the preceding chapter of Daniel.

21. **He was fed with grass like oxen.** In fulfilment of a dream which Daniel had interpreted, and to punish his overweening pride, the great king Nebuchadnezzar became suddenly insane. "The form of madness from which he suffered was that called lycanthropy, in which the patient fancies himself one of the inferior animals, and acts as such. Nebuchadnezzar imagined that he had become an ox, and went forth to eat grass like other cattle (Dan. 4)." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary.* **His body was wet with the dew of heaven.** He stayed outdoors all night, naked. We are also told (Dan. 4 : 33) that his hair, which had been daintily curled and perfumed, grew long and matted, and his finger-nails, which had been so carefully trimmed on his jewelled hands, grew like birds' claws. **Until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men.** It was seven years before Nebuchadnezzar's pride was humbled and his reason returned to him. He no longer said, "This is great Babylon, which I have built by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty" (Dan. 4 : 30), but he gave all glory to the Most High, and knew that man, even the greatest king, is as nothing before him (Dan. 4 : 34, 35).

22. **And thou his son, O Belshazzar.** That is, his successor ; though some hold that Nebuchadnezzar was "the adoptive father" (*Prof. R. D. Wilson*) of Belshazzar, Nabonidus being his real father. **Hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this.** Of course Belshazzar could not have been ignorant of this most striking event in the life of his great predecessor. He had shown his lack of humility most conspicuously that very night, by his pomp and his revelling, and especially by profaning the sacred vessels of the Most High God, whom Nebuchadnezzar had humbly acknowledged to be the one Ruler of all kings.

23. **Thou hast praised the gods . . . which see not, nor hear, nor know.** The Bible often, and with the best of reasons, ridicules the folly of worshiping dead images of diverse materials — gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, stone. Compare Deut. 4 : 28 ; Ps. 115 : 4–8 ; 135 : 15–18 ; Isa. 44 : 9–20; Rev. 9 : 20. Over against these senseless figures Daniel sets the living God, the source of all the life of men, whom Belshazzar had failed to worship and honor.

24. Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed.

25. And this is the writing that was inscribed: MĒ'-NĒ, MĒ'-NĒ, TĒ'-KĔL, Ū-PHĂR'-SĬN.

---

24. **Then** (as a consequence of the king's impious folly) **was the part** (the palm) **of the hand sent from before him.** Daniel would have Belshazzar recognize clearly that the author of the inscription was Jehovah, the only true God. To know this was far more important than to know the meaning of the inscription.

Illustration. "The only ornament on the interior walls of the Assyrian palaces consisted of rude models of hands placed on the cornices, fist upwards, their design being to preserve the place against evil spirits . . . In all likelihood the cornice of the great hall in which Belshazzar's banquet was spread was adorned with representations of the Hand of Might as an object of idolatrous worship. It was in the hand they put their confidence, and that hand wrote the sentence of doom." — *Rev. Hugh Macmillan, D.D., F.R.S.E.*

THE FUNDAMENTAL VIRTUE OF HUMILITY. Our sins should make us humble. "Whatever we are, we carry the placard with us, just as if each one had a banner marked, 'I am a miser,' 'I am a sensualist,' 'I am a thief,' and 'I am a murderer.'" — *Rev. C. D. Bradlee, D.D.* If men can see it, how much more clearly can God!

Humility is the fundamental virtue, because it opens the way for all other virtues. Pride stands in the way of our learning anything. Humility brings us to the feet of the one true Teacher. If Nebuchadnezzar had bowed before God in lowly submission, he would never have bowed among the cattle to eat grass.

Illustration. True humility shows itself in a glad and trustful acceptance of whatever lot God sends us, sure that it is for the best. Dr. Charles L. Goodell tells of a cultured lady, for many years the head of a great school, who became totally blind. He was profoundly moved as she felt her way from pew to pew to shake hands with him, and said to her, "It will all be light up yonder, and you will know why God has permitted this great affliction." She lifted a face transfigured by ineffable peace and replied, "If I am so happy as to get to heaven I shall let bygones be bygones and shall not trouble the Lord for any explanations."

Illustration. "Here is the whole hand. The hand with the nail-prints in it. Here is the hand that explains the fingers of all prophecy. Here is the bleeding hand that interprets the significance of all sacrifice — the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

III. **THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WRITING,** vs. 25–31. 25. **This is the writing that was inscribed : MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.** The inscription was evidently in the Aramaic, the Hebrew of the times, and so was unintelligible to Belshazzar's wise men ; who, even if they understood the letters, would not be able to interpret them because unfamiliar with the symbols of Hebrew prophecy. "Daniel at the first glance had read that fiery quadrilateral of letters, looking like the twelve gems of the high priest's ephod with the mystic light gleaming upon them.

M.	N.	A.
M.	N.	A.
T.	Q.	L.
P.	R.	S.

Four names of weight (the *Mene* is repeated for emphasis.)

A Mina.
A Mina.
A Shekel.
A Half-mina.

26. This is the interpretation of the thing : MĒ'-NĖ ; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end.

27. TĒ'-KĒL ; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

28. PĒ'-RĒṢ ; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Mēdes and Persians.

What possible meaning could there be in that ? . . . The Rabbis say that the words, instead of being written from right to left, were written κιονηδόν, 'pillarwise,' as the Greeks called it, from above downwards, thus :

פ	ת	מ	מ
ר	ק	נ	נ
ס	ל	א	א

Read from left to right, they would look like gibberish ; read from above downwards they became clear as far as the reading was concerned, though their interpretation might still be surpassingly enigmatic." — *F. W. Farrar.*

26. **This is the interpretation of the thing.** " Here Daniel's skill in the 'declaring of riddles' (verse 12) comes in." — *Cambridge Bible.* **MENE ; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end.** Mina, the weight (about two pounds troy, suggested the participle *mene* meaning, " numbered," and so finished, ended.

27. **TEKEL ; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.** *Tekel* is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew *shekel*, the fiftieth part of a mina. It suggested the verb *tekil*, meaning " weighed."

28. **PERES ; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.** In *upharsin* (verse 25) the " u " means simply " and." *Parsin* (written *pharsin* when preceded by a vowel) is the plural of *peres*, a half-mina. The word suggested to Daniel two meanings : *peris*, meaning " divided," and *Paras*, meaning " Persians." Belshazzar's kingdom was to be divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

The king's word had been given and could not be revoked, so that what had been promised to the interpreter of the inscription was bestowed upon Daniel, though he had refused the gifts. After all, it mattered not, since the kingdom was to end that very night. The forces of Cyrus, under his general Gubaru (Gobryas), by many regarded as being Darius the Mede, found entrance to Babylon. The old account has it that the waters of the Euphrates were turned aside by canals and through the dry channel the enemy made their entry under the wall. Now it is believed that the gates were thrown open by a disaffected party within the city. Belshazzar made a desperate resistance with his nobles clad in their holiday attire, but all were easily slain by the hardy mountaineers of Cyrus, and Belshazzar's body lay buried beyond recovery under heaps of the slain. So perished the man whose drunken folly made a jest of Jehovah.

THE JUDGMENT AGAINST KING ALCOHOL, AND ITS ENFORCEMENT. To every drinker there comes a stern judgment like that meted out to King Belshazzar. " Here is a young man who says, 'I cannot see why they make such a fuss about the intoxicating cup. Why, it makes me feel well ! I can talk better, think better, feel better.' A few years pass on, and he wakes up and finds himself in the clutches of an evil habit which he tries to break, but cannot ; and he cries out, 'O Lord God ! help me !' And in an agony of body and soul he cries out, 'It biteth like a serpent, and it stingeth like an adder.'" — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

At last the nation in its turn passed judgment on King Alcohol, and condemned him as Belshazzar was condemned. As we write, he is making just such a last, desperate fight as Belshazzar made in Babylon. In certain great cities he is bribing the authorities for another chance at life. The continued sale of liquor there gives the saloon men the opportunity to cry, " See how impossible it is to enforce prohibition ! "

But over the country as a whole prohibition is enforced, with incalculable gains to the property, bodies, minds, and souls of the citizens. It is conservatively estimated that a billion dollars a year is saved to the United States for useful trade by the Eighteenth Amendment. If the indirect cost of strong drink were added — the cost of crime, disease, insanity, pauperism, idleness — the amount would be far more than doubled. And the saving in manhood, in eternal destinies, passes all computation.

The nation will never go back to the bad old days. All that is now needed is the insistence on the strict enforcement of the law. Let good men combine. Let the strongest and truest men take office. King Alcohol has been weighed and found wanting, and his days have been numbered to a close.

LESSON IV (30). — July 23.

DANIEL AND THE LIONS. — Daniel 6 : 1–28.

PRINT vs. 16–23.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.* — HEB. 11 : 33.

Devotional Reading : Rom. 8 : 31–39.
Reference Material : Jer. 38 ; Dan. 3 ; Acts 12 : 1–19 ; 23 : 12–35 ; Heb. 11 : 32–40.
Primary Topic : GOD TAKES CARE OF DANIEL.
Lesson Material : Dan. 6 : 16–23.
Memory Verse : What time I am afraid,
I will put my trust in thee. Ps. 56 : 3.
Junior Topic : DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.
Lesson Material : Dan. 6 : 16–23.
Memory Verse : Ps. 34 : 7.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: DANIEL'S HEROIC FAITH.
Topic for Young People and Adults : TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF FAITH.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes. — Begin by asking how many have ever seen a lion, where, and what they thought of it. Tell the children some story of a lion, such as of the lion that nearly killed Livingstone. Show a picture of a lion, and keep it before the class during the recitation. Tell the story of Daniel's testing and how he stood the test. Have some pupil tell it over after you. Apply the lesson to the chances each of them has every day to stand up for the truth and the right. God will see them through as he saw Daniel through.

The Older Classes. — Appoint some member of the class in advance to question the class on the facts of the lesson. Appoint a number of others each of whom will bring in one illustration of the courageous stand for the right in the face of danger. Then proceed to discuss the general question of the need of faith in God and how that faith will be exercised practically in the testings of modern life. Get expressions from men and women of as many different occupations as possible.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher dates this lesson B. C. 538, a year after the last lesson, the first year of the reign of Cyrus. The Darius of this lesson "is not mentioned in any known literature outside the Bible. He has been identified with various persons, for example with Astyages or with Cyaxares, kings of Media, or with Gobryas, the general of Cyrus, who captured Babylon, or with the later king, Darius Hystaspis. As plausible a notion as any is that Darius is Cyrus himself under another name." — *Prof. W. J. Beecher.*

Place. — Babylon, the great city in lower Mesopotamia, recently captured from Belshazzar by the Medes and Persians.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Lions in Bible lands.
Examples of the evils of jealousy.
Good and bad characteristics of Darius.
Other Bible characters tested like Daniel
The secret of Daniel's courage.
Need of Daniels to-day.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Daniel's Heroic Faith.

I. DANIEL'S DEFIANCE, VS. 1–10.
- Daniel's advancement.
- The jealous satraps.
- The dastardly plot.
- Daniel is true to his God.
- Holding faithful to our religion.

II. DANIEL'S DOOM, VS. 11–20.
- The accusation.
- The anxious king.
- The verdict.
- The night of fasting.
- Trials of the faithful.

III. DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE. VS. 21–28.
- The lions' den.
- The angel of safety.
- The doom of Daniel's foes.
- Darius honors Jehovah.
- The triumph of faith.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible* and *The Great Christian Doctrines: Prayer*. Macmillan's *Gleanings in Holy Fields*. Spurgeon's *Sermons. Vol. 13*. Phelps's *Studies of the Old Testament*. Godet's *Biblical Studies*. Moody's *Bible Characters*. McNeill's *Sermons, Vol. 2*. Foster's *Lectures, Vol. 2*. Farrar's *Everyday Christian Life*. Parkhurst's *The Pattern in the Mount*. MacArthur's *The Attractive Christ*. Mathesons's *Messages of Hope*. Work's *Every Day*. Brown's *The Quest of Life*. Palmer's *True Success in Life*. Odenheimer's *Sermons*. Young's *Unfamiliar Texts*. Lee's *Eventful Nights in Bible History*. Hunter's *The Story of Daniel*. H. Arnold Thomas in *The Christian World Pulpit*, No. 1863.

I. DANIEL'S DEFIANCE, VS. 1–10. DANIEL'S ADVANCEMENT. King Darius, on succeeding to the throne, divided the kingdom into 120 provinces or satrapies and placed over each a governor or satrap. Later under Xerxes the Persian Empire was divided into 127 satrapies (Esth. 1 : 1 ; 8 : 9). Herodotus says that under Darius Hystaspis there were only twenty of these provinces. For purposes of administration the provinces were grouped in three divisions and over each was a general officer. Daniel was appointed one of these three presidents, and was regarded the leading one because of his wisdom and executive power ; indeed, there was likelihood that he would be made a viceroy over the entire kingdom. It was the same advancement that the great Hebrew's conspicuous abilities had won under Nebuchadnezzar.

(The reader may be interested to know how some names look in the cuneiform characters.)

Babylon
in the Babylonian or Assyrian language. Taken from one of Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions.

The Name "Darius"
in the Assyrian language.

The Name "Cyrus"
in the Persian language. Taken from an inscription at Murgab.

THE JEALOUS SATRAPS. It was quite in accord with our sinful human nature that the satraps, instead of rejoicing that Daniel's superior powers were fittingly recognized, should entertain jealousy, that vice of little minds and low abilities. They looked around for some chance to bring a charge against Daniel, but his conduct was exemplary, and they could find no chink for the insertion of their poisoned dagger. The provincial governors were almost in despair.

THE DASTARDLY PLOT. At last the satraps bethought themselves of their one chance against Daniel. He was very religious, and he was devoted to a foreign deity. They knew that he would hold to his religion through thick and thin, and so they devised a way to make it very dangerous for him to do so. They persuaded Darius to sign a decree that for thirty days no one in the kingdom should make a petition to god or man but only to the king. They lied about it, for they said that the proposal came from *all* the presidents and satraps, though Daniel, the chief president, had not been consulted. "They most likely tickled his vanity, and told him that he was the most popular man that had ever reigned in Babylon ; and that they had been consulting together what they could do to increase his popularity. If you touch a man's vanity he will do almost anything."— *D. L. Moody*.

"If there should be an excessive drought or rain, not a word of supplication to any Immortal Power controlling the elements ; if a pestilence, not one petitionary sacrifice for abating it ; if a man were sick he must not request a physician to visit him ; if fallen into a pit, not call out for assistance ; if his house were on fire, not

entreat his neighbors to put it out ; if famishing, not ask for a morsel of bread ; if a man had offended or injured his brother, he must not ask him to forgive."—*John Foster.*

"Among the Medes and Persians the monarch was regarded in some sort as an incarnation of Ahura Mazda, the supreme deity. His decrees were infallible, and could not be repealed. He dwelt in the privacy of his palace, secluded from the eyes of the profane crowd, fenced round by an etiquette fantastic in its stringency. The sculptures of Persepolis show the monarch wearing a peculiar kind of shoe, so as to elevate him above the stature of common men. Thus Darius saw nothing absurd in his courtiers' proposal."— *P. Hay Hunter.*

DANIEL IS TRUE TO HIS GOD. "Why, we may ask, should Daniel have fallen into a trap it was so easy to avoid? He need not drop one petition out of his daily prayers. He need not by word or gesture pay blasphemous honor to the new sovereign."— *Hastings.* All he needed to do was to go along as usual, not obtruding his religion upon public attention, and he would foil his foes and save the life which was so precious to his countrymen and to the world. Why should he court martyrdom?

Thus spoke the cowardly counsels of worldly prudence, which Daniel was too much a man to heed. "It was not so much that he refused the obedience of men as that he gave himself heart and soul to the obedience of God."—*Phillips Brooks.* "Safety First" is a wise rule, but when infidelity and idolatry command silence "Safety First" is the most perilous of rules. Daniel would have none of it.

"Mr. Spurgeon tells us of a curious blunder which a printer made in printing a portion of the story of Daniel. Instead of saying, 'Daniel had an excellent spirit,' the printer made the types say, 'Daniel had an excellent spine.' This was not much of a mistake. Thank God for Daniel's spine!"— *Rev. Robert S. MacArthur, D.D.*

Daniel did not wait for the king's edict to grow cold and public interest to slacken, but as soon as he knew the law was signed he went to his praying-place in his house and offered prayer.

This praying-place was before one of the wide, open windows so necessary in that hot climate, where every one could look in and see him. There he prayed customarily three times a day, at morning, noon, and night. "His devoutness was not a paroxysm of godliness excited by present exigency, nor an assumption of godliness induced by present intimidation :—'as he did aforetime.'"— *Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.* Successful prayer must be regular and persistent prayer.

Also, if we would gain the most from prayer, while we shall be "instant in prayer," ready with an instinctive prayer in any special trial, yet our usual prayers should be in some place and amid surroundings especially dedicated to prayer ; thus the simple act of going there will put our souls into the attitude of prayer. Daniel was in the habit of praying always toward the west, toward his beloved Jerusalem and the site of Solomon's temple, though the heathen all around him prayed toward the east, the sunrising.

Illustration. "In every Mohammedan mosque there is a focus of interest and use, a kind of alcove or niche in the wall, which is sometimes richly decorated but most frequently plain in its adornment. This niche is called the Mihrab, and is intended to mark the direction in which Mecca, the sacred city of the followers of the prophet, lies ; and that direction is called the Kiblah. Every worshipper kneels with his face looking to the Mihrab. The Kiblah point is in Syria and Palestine the south, in Egypt the east, and in Constantinople the southeast."— *Rev. Hugh Macmillan, D.D., F.R.S.E.*

HOLDING FAITHFUL TO OUR RELIGION. "Open windows will some day conquer the white plague. But are there not other diseases and troubles that would yield to open windows? Indifference, for example, and despair, and suspicion, and unbelief."— *Rev. E. W. Work, D.D.* Live behind the open windows of faithful prayer.

Fidelity to religion will give you courage in every trial. "When St. Felix of Nola was hotly pursued by murderers, he took refuge in a cave, and instantly over the rift of it the spiders wove their webs ; and, seeing this, the murderers passed by. Then said the saint, 'Where God is not, a wall is but a spider's web ; where God is, a spider's web is as a wall.'"— *F. W. Farrar.*

"Daniel was a busy man. Daniel was a prime minister. The whole administration fell upon him. You can imagine how, day by day, officers of state, servants higher or lower, were continually coming to this pivot man. Yet that is the man who found time three times a day to kneel down and pray to the God of heaven. The

16. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

---

best method for getting through a heavy day's work is to be a man of prayer."— *Rev. John Mc Neill.*

Windows that look toward Jerusalem : prayer, obedience, Bible-reading, Sabbath observance. " Here is the house of our life, amid all the thousands of employments which may threaten to overwhelm us, here will ever be an open window which looks toward Jerusalem."— *Rev. H. Arnold Thomas.*

Illustrations. " Among the most eminent of the generals of Frederick the Great of Prussia was Ziethen, who was a decided Christian while Frederick was an infidel and scoffer. Once Ziethen excused himself from court to attend the communion service, and a few days after, when a number of officers were dining with the king, Frederick turned on him and asked banteringly, ' Well, Ziethen, how did the sacrament digest last Friday ? ' The old general calmly answered, 'Your Majesty does wrong to treat the Christian religion with disrespect. You owe to it the safety of your throne and the stability of your government. You must pardon an old servant who cannot bear in silence any disrespect done to his Lord and Saviour.' The king held out his hand to the old soldier, begged his forgiveness, and said, ' Happy Ziethen, you shall be disturbed no more.' "— *Ray Palmer.*

Dr. Palmer also tells of a college rebellion in which the students refused to attend any recitation ; but a single young man felt it his duty to go to his classes as usual, and this he did quietly and modestly, in the midst of the groans and hisses of his mates, for several days. The result was that he not only had the cordial sympathy of the faculty and the loyal students, but even those that had heaped abuse upon him honored him the more in the end.

II. DANIEL'S DOOM, vs. 11–20. THE ACCUSATION. In reporting Daniel's defiance of the king's command, the satraps did not forget to remind Darius that Daniel was only a Hebrew captive. It was a mere worm like that that had dared to disregard the mighty monarch of the world's most powerful empire ! And we hear of no word from Daniel. The aged statesman seems to have been given no opportunity to make his defence. The entire proceeding is characteristic of despotism. Even the enemies of our Lord, pushing against him an illegal trial, were compelled to give him a chance for a defence, though a useless one.

THE ANXIOUS KING. Horrified at the result of his careless decree, and seeing instantly the plot against his prime minister, Darius sought for hours to save Daniel " The courtiers grimly held him fast to his decree, and peremptorily demanded his respect for the law of the Medes and Persians that no edict of the king should be changed or withdrawn in favor of whatsoever person."— *Rev. A. Mitchell Hunter* " The man who says, ' I never alter my opinions,' condemns himself as either too foolish or too proud to learn."— *Alexander Maclaren.* Our wiser modern systems of government include always some pardoning power.

Illustration. " How often this has been repeated in history ! We think of Herod, who loved John the Baptist, in a sense, and heard him gladly, and who yet sorrowfully gave him up to the executioner's axe under the idea that he must keep his promise to a giddy girl, and stand well with the drunken revellers by whom he was surrounded. We think of Pilate, washing his hands before the crowd, as if that would cleanse his heart from the bloody spot by which it was stained when he gave up Jesus to the cross . . . When Palissy, the Huguenot potter, was lying a prisoner in the Bastile for his adherence to the Protestant faith, it was said that the King of France, who had a great regard for him, visited him in his dungeon, and told him that if he did not comply with the established religion he should be forced, however unwillingly, to leave him in the hands of his enemies. ' Forced, sire ! ' replied the noble old man ; ' this is not to speak like a king ; but they who force you cannot force me. I can die.' "— *William M. Taylor.*

16. **Then the king commanded.** Following out the cruel terms of his own decree (vs. 7, 12). **And they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions.** " The Eastern monarchs were accustomed to keep lions in confinement ; not as the Egyptians did, tamed for the purposes of hunting, as is represented in their sculptures ;

17. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den ; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords ; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

18. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting ; neither were instruments of music brought before him : and his sleep fled from him.

19. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

A Clay Document Signed by a Seal.

or for the sake of the shows of the arena, and for public combats, as among the Romans ; but for regal pomp and ostentation, though, as in the case of Daniel, they were also employed as instruments of despotic vengeance."— *Canon Tristram, "Natural History of the Bible."* We must remember that Daniel was an old man, doubtless older than eighty. **Now the king spake and said unto Daniel.** The favor of Darius for Daniel is shown throughout the account. **Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.** "Rather, 'May he deliver thee!' The king hopes, even against hope, that Daniel may by some means or other be spared his fate."— *Cambridge Bible.*

17. **And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den.** "There were probably walls rising from the sides of the pit which formed the den ; in that wall there would be naturally an aperture through which food could be passed to the lions. Through this door was Daniel cast, and when he had been so cast in, a stone was rolled up to the aperture and sealed." — *Pulpit Commentary.* **And the king sealed it with his own signet.** Seals were in common use throughout the ancient world. They were made of precious stones or of metal, of procelain or terra cotta, and clay was used to receive the impression, it being afterwards hardened by burning. "When a door or a stone was to be sealed, a clay seal was put at each end of the cord stretched across it. Some stones so sealed still retain the cord marks."— *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.* Thus was sealed the stone that closed the entrance to Christ's tomb (Matt. 27 : 66). **And with the signet of his lords.** Each signet was different, and was the virtual signature of the owner, who, very likely, was unable to write. **That nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.** That there might be no change in the disposition of Daniel, by rescue or by the giving of aid against the lions.

18. **Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting.** "That long night which Darius passed in fasting, and which presented the unwonted spectacle of an oriental monarch's court suddenly stripped of its brilliant pomp and luxury and his palace turned into a house of mourning, was a night of deep reflection, not on the mere personal issue involved in the life or death of Daniel, but on the high and eternal issue of the truth or falsehood of Daniel's God."— *Bishop Odenheimer.* **Neither were instruments of music brought before him.** The meaning of the noun here is unknown. Some translate it "dancing-girls." At any rate, the king's customary diversions were omitted. **And his sleep fled from him.** Because of anxiety ; doubtless also because of an accusing conscience.

19. **Then the king arose very early in the morning.** As soon as he could see into the pit, his dread of what he might see holding him back, his anxiety spurring him on. **And went in haste unto the den of lions.** Dignity evidently quite forgotten, as it should have been. We think of John and Peter running to the sepulchre of Christ on Easter morning.

20. **And when he came near unto the den to Daniel.** Expecting to see the mangled remains of the aged prophet. **He cried with a lamentable voice.** His voice trembled

20. And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice ; the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions ?

21. Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me ; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me ; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23. Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him because he had trusted in his God.

---

in the excess of his emotion, as well it might. **O Daniel, servant of the living God.** Darius, a heathen, was compelled to pay this much tribute to Daniel's God. Only a living God could inspire a living faith like Daniel's. **Is thy God . . . able to deliver thee from the lions ?** " Thy God," note, not "my God." Darius would not say " my God " till Jehovah had proved his power — if then.

THE TRIALS OF THE FAITHFUL. Every Christian is sure to be tested. " You may have been told this very week that if you try to be honest in business you will starve ; if you tell the truth you will go to the wall ; if you maintain those fine scruples you will be a fool for your pains. 'Here are the lions waiting to eat you ! One of them is called Failure, and another Poverty, and another the World's Scorn. The writing is signed — it is all there in black and white.' In all of its details this ancient story is true to life."— *Dean Charles R. Brown, D.D.*

" Well does one of the old writers call Daniel 'Cœur de Lion.' He had the heart of a lion. Into that cage of lions he went, a lion-like man."— *C. H. Spurgeon.* Every true Christian is like him in the presence of trial.

Each Christian is tested in a different way. Poverty comes to him, or sickness, or failure, or obloquy, or the loss of dear ones. Each heart knows its own trial, but each heart may also know him through whom the trial may be met and gloriously overcome.

III. **DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE,** vs. 21–28. 21. **Then said Daniel unto the king.** " How were the ears of Darius gladdened by the sound of the prophet's voice, assuring him of his perfect safety !"— *Bishop Alfred Lee.* **O king, live forever.** The customary address to the king.

22. **My God hath sent his angel.** " We are not to learn from this that we are to expect angels to come to our rescue from wild beasts and wilder men ; but God will do for us what he sees, in his infinite insight and foresight, to be best, all things considered, and in doing this he often achieves results which are as distinctly suggestive of his agency as miracles are."— *Prof. Austin Phelps.* **And hath shut the lions' mouths.** More than one man, attacked by a lion, has had such an experience as that of Mungo Park, who, when confronted, weaponless, by a raging lion, quelled it only by a steady gaze before which the king of beasts slunk away in fear. **And they have not hurt me.** Spurgeon suggests that Daniel may even have slept that night with his head pillowed on the soft body of a lion. **Forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me.** Daniel is not claiming perfection, but is calling God to witness his innocence of any sin that deserved such a punishment. **And also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.** " Probably with distinct allusion to the uncorruptedness of his official life."— *Speaker's Commentary.*

23. **Then was the king exceeding glad.** Perhaps it was the happiest moment of his life. **And commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den.** We may imagine how he urged his servants to make haste. So **Daniel was taken up out of the den.** " As he reaches the top, I fancy I see them embracing one another ; and that then Daniel mounts the king's chariot, and is driven back with him to the royal palace."— *D. L. Moody.* **And no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God.** " It is not enough for a man to be taken out of his den. When he has been raised from his calamity the question remains, 'Has it hurt him ?'" *George Matheson.* Daniel's trust kept him unscathed, in body and soul.

" Do you see the Hebrew captive kneeling,
At morning, noon, and night to pray ?
In his chamber he remembers Zion,
Though in exile far away.

" Do not fear to tread the fiery furnace.
Nor shrink the lions' den to share ;
For the God of Daniel will deliver,
He will send his angel there.

" Children of the living God, take courage,
Your great deliverance sweetly sing ;
Set your faces toward the hill of Zion,
Thence to hail your coming King ! " — *P. P. Bliss.*

THE DOOM OF DANIEL'S FOES. The word used for the accusation brought by Daniel's enemies is a cruel word, implying hostility that hunts a man down, cuts him in pieces, and eats his flesh. With entire justice, these accusers were thrust into the den of lions where they had thrust Daniel, and were instantly devoured, with their wives and children. " The law of retribution runs through Scripture and through human history. 'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.' Joseph's brethren cast him into a pit and they were afterwards cast into a dungeon. Haman was hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai. Often in this life evil men and women get into the den of lions into which they have driven others. And if not here, then hereafter there is a retributive den of lions for all workers of evil. Take care ! Beware how you act."— *Dinsdale T. Young.* The Persian law that the offender's family should share his punishment was a cruel one, but even to-day we see how those nearest and dearest to a wicked man are involved in his fate.

DARIUS HONORS JEHOVAH. " Darius proclaimed the name of Jehovah throughout his kingdom and ordered worship to be paid to it. Daniel's misfortune, like Paul's, turned out to the furtherance of God's truth. ' The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.' If, for the love of God, we are ever led into difficulty, be assured it will serve as a new means for the honor of God."— *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH. " Ye men of faith, hoist your colors ! Leave to your God the providing, stick ye to the obeying."— *C. H. Spurgeon.*

" Lions still stand in the pathway of duty for the children of God. But those who move forward in that pathway shall find that the lions are chained and their jaws locked, so that they can inflict no evil."— *Rev. Robert S. MacArthur, D.D.*

" By faith we receive the bodily protection God grants to us through the years. By faith we receive that greater safety which concerns the soul."— *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

" Fierce lions roaring for their prey ? and then
Daniel thrown in ? And Daniel yet remain
Alive ? There was a Lion in the den
Was Daniel's friend, or Daniel had been slain.
Among ten thousand lions I'd not fear
Had I but only Daniel's Lion there."

— *Francis Quarles, Divine Fancies, I, 32.*

LESSON V (31). — July 30.

THE FIRST RETURN FROM EXILE. — Jeremiah 29 : 10–14 ; Ezra 1 : 1–11.

PRINT Jer. 29 : 10 ; Ezra 1 : 1–8, 11.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *We know that to them that love God all things work together for good.* — ROM. 8 : 28.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 85 : 1–9.
Reference Material : Psalms 85 ; 86 ; 122–124 ; 130 ; 131 ; Jer. 29.
Primary Topic : GOD'S PEOPLE RETURN HOME.
Lesson Material : Ezra 1 : 1–11. Print vs. 1–8, 11.
Memory Verse : Jehovah hath done great things for us,
Whereof we are glad. Ps. 126 : 3.
Junior Topic : HOW GOD KEPT A GREAT PROMISE.
Lesson Material : Jer. 29 : 10–14 ; Ezra 1 : 1–11. Print Jer. 29 : 10 ; Ezra 1 : 1–8, 11.
Memory Verses : Ps. 126 : 1–3.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : HOW GOD KEPT A GREAT PROMISE.
Topic for Young People and Adults : STRIKING MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes. — Begin with these by asking them to tell of some promise they have recently made or one made to them. Was it kept? Do they always keep their promises? Then ask them if they know of any promise of God. Repeat one, such as the promise in Gen. 8 : 22. Has that promise been kept? Thus God's promises always are kept. To-day we are to study a great promise made by God to an entire nation.

The Older Classes. — This is a lesson in God's providence. The lesson text is itself a conspicuous and convincing illustration, but it may be enforced by many examples from secular history and from other parts of the Bible. To obtain these, ask one student to bring at least one illustration from the earlier part of the Old Testament, another from the New Testament, others from the history of our own country, of England, France, Germany, Italy, of ancient Greece and Rome. Close with a consideration of the workings of God's providence in individual lives.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher dates the first exile (in which Daniel shared) at B. C. 605, and the first return at B. C. 538, about seventy years later. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* makes these dates B. C. 606 and 536, just seventy years apart.

Place. — Babylon, the great city on the southern Euphrates, the capital of the Persian empire.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Jeremiah's prophecy of the return.
Isaiah's teaching about the Remnant.
The chronology of the exile.
What the Israelites learned from the exile
The power and character of Cyrus.
Reasons for the return from exile.
Ezra and his book.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : How God Kept a Great Promise.

I. GOD'S GREAT PROMISE, Jer. 29 : 10–14.
The seventy years in exile.
God's thoughts of peace.
Prayer and its answer.

II. GOD MOVES THE SPIRIT OF CYRUS, Ezra 1 : 1–4.
"By the mouth of Jeremiah."
God's thought and the king's thought.
The emancipation proclamation.
God's unfailing memory.

III. GOD'S GREAT PROMISE FULFILLED, Ezra 1 : 5–11.
The Jewish leaders aroused.
The gifts of the heathen.
The sacred vessels.
On the way home.
The workings of God's providence.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Rawlinson's *Ezra and Nehemiah, Their Lives and Times*. *Commentaries* on Jeremiah, already named. *Commentaries* on Ezra : by Adeney (*Expositor's Bible*), Davies (*New Century Bible*), Bishop Ryle (*Cambridge Bible*), Rawlinson (*Pulpit Commentary*), Joseph Parker (*People's Bible*), Ellicott, *Speaker's Bible*, Gray, Peake, Dummelow, etc. Chapters on the passages from Jeremiah and Ezra in David Smith's *Man's Need of God*, William M. Taylor's *Contrary Winds*, Cox's *Expositions, Vol. 2*, Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*, Spurgeon's *Sermons, Vol. 18*. Hastings's *The Christian Doctrine of Prayer*, and *The Christian Doctrine of Faith*. Maclaren's *Expositions*.

Jer. 29 : 10. For thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

I. **GOD'S GREAT PROMISE,** Jer. 29 : 10–14. Jeremiah's twenty-ninth chapter is a letter which he wrote to the exiles in Babylon. This letter is "the nearest analogue to be found in the Old Testament to the Epistles which form so large a part of the New."— *Samuel Cox*. The purpose of the letter was to assure them that, in spite of the false prophets who were foretelling a speedy return, they should remain in captivity seventy years. No shorter period would suffice to teach Israel the lessons it needed to learn from this bitter experience. But they were not to despair, for at the end of the seventh decade the nation would surely be restored to its own land. Professor Beecher dates the letter B. C. 595, in the second year of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, the first deportation having taken place ten years before and the second three years before.

10. **For thus saith Jehovah.** A solemn sentence, solemnly introduced. **After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon.** The seventy years was, in round numbers, the duration of the empire of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, and therefore of the exile, since Cyrus, founder of the new dynasty, would immediately allow the exiles to return. It was a mystic number, ten times the sacred number seven. **I will visit you.** "To 'visit' frequently has the sense of 'taking notice of' or 'paying heed to.'" — *Prof. T. K. Cheyne*. **And perform my good word toward you.**

Ezra 1 : 1. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,

This good word was the promise recorded in Jer. 24 : 6 ; 27 : 22, that the Jewish exiles should be restored to their land. **In causing you to return to this place.** Jerusalem, the place in which Jeremiah was writing, thought of as the place in which God was dwelling.

GOD'S THOUGHTS OF PEACE. The prophecy continues in some of the most eloquent sentences of Holy Writ. The Jews might think that God had forgotten them, " but I," said Jehovah, " know my thoughts toward my people, and they are thoughts that seek their peace and not their evil, their hope and not their despair. The days are coming when your hard hearts, that have so often turned toward senseless idols, will turn again to your loving Father. Nor will you turn in vain. *Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*" That last sentence is the great promise to prayer, good for all ages and all peoples. It is the climax of the prophecy. To find God is the reward of all search, and compared with that the promise of a turn of their captivity back to their home land is only a slight thing. Having found God, any country would be their home land.

PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER. " No calamity can be to us an unmixed evil if we carry it in direct and fervent prayer to God, for even as one in taking shelter from the rain beneath a tree may find on its branches fruit which he looked not for, so we, in fleeing for refuge beneath the shadow of God's wing, will always find more in God than we had seen or known before."— *William M. Taylor.*

" Do we look out for God's providence ? Have we the eye of faith ? It is one thing to be in God's hands — as we all most surely are ; it is another thing to know that this is so."— *Hastings.*

" Prayer is to me the quick and instant recognition that all law is God's will, and all nature is in God's hand, and that all our welfare lies in linking ourselves with his will and placing ourselves in his hand."— *Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D.*

" A life marked by daily answer to prayer is the proof of our spiritual maturity ; that we have indeed attained to the true abiding in Christ ; that our will is truly at one with God's will ; that our faith has grown strong to see and take what God has provided for us."—*Andrew Murray.*

Symbolical Figure of Cyrus (from the Persepolitan Monuments) and His Name in Cuneiform Characters.

II. GOD MOVES THE SPIRIT OF CYRUS, Ezra 1 : 1–4. THE BOOK OF EZRA AND ITS AUTHORSHIP. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are closely linked together, and it is probable that, though the portions of each in the first person were written by Ezra and Nehemiah respectively, the remaining portions were written by one person, probably the author of the books of Chronicles, some think by Ezra himself. The latter supposition, however, meets with the puzzle why he did not write it all in the first person. The first six chapters of Ezra relate the first return of the Jews under Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar), the restoration of divine service, and the erection of the temple. The remaining four chapters relate the return of a second body of exiles under Ezra himself eighty years later. The book is largely made up of copies of public records and official documents written in Aramaic, while the narrative portions are in Hebrew.

1. **Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia.** Not the first year of his reign as king of Persia, but perhaps nine years later, the first year of his reign as king of

2. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me ; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem.

4. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

Babylonia. Cyrus was king of Elam, a country beyond the Tigris east of Babylonia. Joining with Media to the north of Elam, he became king of Persia to the south of Elam, conquered Lydia far to the west in Asia Minor, turned against Babylonia and captured it, as we have already learned, by means of his general Gobryas, who may have been the Darius who was set up as subordinate king of Babylon. Xenophon's historical romance, *Cyropædia* ("The Education of Cyrus") represents him as a noble character. He is thought to have been a Zoroastrian, with many approaches toward the true religion, and therefore favorably inclined toward the Jews. **That the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished.** The prophecy of the return after seventy years in exile which we have just studied. **Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia.** "By a direct influence, probably through the instrumentality of Daniel."— *Ellicott*. **So that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom.** "Literally, 'he caused (a herald) to pass (the message).'" — *Prof. T. Wilton Davis*. His kingdom was very extensive, including Persia, Elam, Media, Babylonia, and reaching in Lydia to the shores of the Mediterranean. **And put it also in writing.** This decree was the emancipation proclamation of the Hebrew race, and it was of the utmost importance to them that it should be in writing, and accessible for reference among the state records of Cyrus.

2. **Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia.** Cyrus called himself king of Persia even after he had added so many lands to his domain. **All the kingdoms of the earth.** Of course that was an exaggeration, even in view of the restricted geography of the day, since Eygpt, for example, was not under his sway. **Hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me.** "'God of heaven' seems to have been a usual title of the Supreme Being among the Persians."— *Pulpit Commentary*. Some think that the mention of Jehovah in this was a confession of the true God on the part of Cyrus ; others, that "Jehovah" is only in the Hebrew translation of the proclamation, and that Cyrus actually used the name of his chief deity, Ormuzd. **And he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem.** Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* XI. 1.) says that the prophecy to this effect in Isa. 44 : 28 was shown to Cyrus soon after the capture of Babylon, and that he understood the prophecy to be a command from God which he must obey. **Which is in Judah.** So fallen and forgotten was the proud capital of the Hebrews that it was thought necessary to say where its ruins were to be found !

3. **Whosoever there is among you of all his people.** Cyrus includes in his permission to return all the Jews, of the Northern Kingdom as well as the Southern. His rule included the countries to which all the exiles had been transported. **His God be with him.** "A pious wish, almost a blessing, indicative of the deep religious feeling and great goodness of heart which characterized Cyrus alone of Persian monarches. Among the Greeks Æschylus, who first speaks of him, calls him 'kindly' or 'gracious' (*εὐφρων*); Herodotus says he ruled his subjects like a father ; Xenophon makes him a model prince ; Plutarch observes that 'in wisdom and virtue and greatness of soul he excelled all other kings'; Diodorus ascribes to him a remarkable power of self-command, together with good feeling and gentleness. The Latin writers, Cicero and others, add their meed of praise ; and altogether it may be said that, so far as the evidence reaches, no nobler character appears in ancient history. The Scriptural notices, whether in this book or in Isaiah, are in remarkable accord."— *Rawlinson*. **And let him go up to Jerusalem.** Jerusalem was on much higher ground than Babylon. **And build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel.** "Israel," after the exile, meant all the Jews, as before the disruption of the kingdom. **(He is God).** He is *the* God, the true and only God.

4. **And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth.** That is, any survivor of the captivity, wherever he may be living. **Let the men of his place**

5. Then rose up the heads of fathers' *houses* of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.

6. And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

---

help him with silver, and with gold. The kind monarch wishes to make sure that no Jew shall be prevented by his poverty from joining the company of homeward-bound pilgrims. **And with goods, and with beasts.** The poor Jewish exile would also need household goods to set him up again in his homeland, and horses, asses, or camels to transport the outfit, himself, and his family over all the weary leagues of the four-months journey. **Besides the freewill-offering for the house of God.** Cyrus was himself about to make such an offering, returning the temple's service of gold and silver, and he suggests that others may wish to follow his example. He was not afraid that liberal giving to another faith would diminish the gifts to his own, nor did he subscribe to the doctrine that money should be "kept at home." Let all opponents of foreign missions learn a lesson from this heathen king.

GOD'S UNFAILING MEMORY. "Divine delays do not imply forgetfulness. Seventy years had passed away since the Jews had been carried off into captivity. The old men had died in Babylonia ; the children of the year of exile were gray-haired. There were men and women in the prime of life to whom Jerusalem and the temple were but names. Some of them doubtless had forgotten God, and many thought that God had forgotten them. But God had not forgotten, though he delayed. With him a thousand years are as one day. There are many other divine delays in Scripture. When our Saviour heard that Lazarus was sick, he delayed his coming to Bethany for two days. We must never seek to enforce our times on God. We must learn to wait for him, no less than to work for him."— *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

"Why should we doubt his care or grace,
As though he had forgotten ?
As though time's changes could efface
What love had once begotten ?
As though he'd lost us from his thought,
And moved on now without us,
Whose love has always goodness wrought,
And constant been about us ? "

— *Rev. J. E. Rankin, D.D.*

III. **GOD'S GREAT PROMISE FULFILLED,** Ezra 1 : 5-11. 5. **Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses.** "A Jewish tribe was divided into families (or clans), each family (or clan) was subdivided into houses."— *New Century Bible.* **Of Judah and Benjamin.** The little tribe of Benjamin, lying between the Northern and Southern kingdoms, is counted with Judah, though really many — perhaps most — of its members adhered to Israel. **And the priests, and the Levites.** The Levites, descendants of Levi, were the temple servants who aided the priests in the service of the sanctuary. The priests also were Levites, belonging, at least early in the history of Israel, to the priestly family of Aaron. **Even all whose spirit God had stirred.** God moved upon the spirit of Cyrus to make the decree (verse 1) and upon the spirits of the Jews to respond to it. The wonderful event of the return was all of the Lord, a marvelous example of God's loving providence. **To go up to build the house of Jehovah.** Not the freedom of the Jews is set forth as the great end of the return, but the restoration of God's house. It was for that that these Jews left their comfort in Babylon and went back to their desolated fatherland in much the same spirit that had animated their ancestor Abraham when he made the same journey. "What need had God for a house ? He made the stars ; he wears the constellations as a garment ; the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him : what does he want with a house ? Nothing ; but he knows that we do ; he knows that the building of the house is necessary for our education."— *Joseph Parker.*

6. **And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands.** This expression means the heathen neighbors of the returning Jews and doubtless also it includes the Jews that did not choose to return. These all grasped the hands of the returning Jews "as if they were convalescents essaying to walk and needing assistance."— *Cambridge Bible.* **With vessels of silver . . . and with precious**

7. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Něb-ū-chăd-nĕz'-zär had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods ;

8. Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mĭth'-rĕ-dăth the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shĕsh-băz'-zär, the prince of Judah.

11. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shĕsh-băz'-zär bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

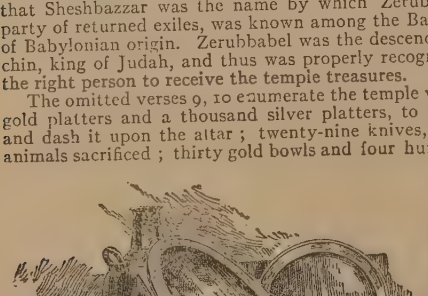
---

things. The latter implies gifts made of the precious metals. "These neighbors could not go themselves, but they could have a share in the work by means of their gifts,— as the home church can share in the foreign missions she supports."— *Prof. Walter F. Adeney.* **Besides all that was willingly offered.** Not that the other gifts were not given willingly, but their nature had been specified in the decree of Cyrus ; these freewill-offerings went beyond the decree.

7. **Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah.** Doubtless all he could find, but probably not all that had been taken away, for some of those were bronze, and none but gold and silver vessels are mentioned here. **Which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem.** "The carrying off of sacred vessels, as well as images, from temples is often represented in the Assyrian sculptures. It was a practice even of the Romans, and is commemorated on the Pillar of Titus, where the seven-branched candlestick of the Jewish temple is represented as borne in triumph by Roman soldiers."— *Pulpit Commentary.* This passage received frequent illustration during the World War. The allusion here is to the spoiling of the temple when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoiachin. When, eleven years later, the city was finally subdued and the temple destroyed few objects of value remained to take away, and these were chiefly of bronze. **And had put in the house of his gods.** As only one temple is mentioned, we may think of it as the temple of Nebuchadnezzar's favorite deity, the principal god of Babylon, Marduk (Merodach). Cyrus risked offending the priests of that temple by this act.

8. **By the hand of Mithredath the treasurer.** Mithredath (Mithridates) means "dedicated to Mithra," the Persian sun-god. Treasure was often kept in temples, as being safest from robbery, and this man was in charge of the temple treasury. **And numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.** There is little doubt that Sheshbazzar was the name by which Zerubbabel, the Jew who led this first party of returned exiles, was known among the Babylonians, though both names are of Babylonian origin. Zerubbabel was the descendant and legal successor of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, and thus was properly recognized as the head of the Jews and the right person to receive the temple treasures.

The omitted verses 9, 10 enumerate the temple vessels that were returned. Thirty gold platters and a thousand silver platters, to receive the blood of the offerings and dash it upon the altar ; twenty-nine knives, probably used for cutting up the animals sacrificed ; thirty gold bowls and four hundred and ten silver bowls, vessels with covers or lids ; of other vessels a thousand. This gift "put an end to an ancient insult offered by Babylon to the God of Israel, and it might be taken as an act of homage offered to Jehovah by Cyrus. Yet it was only a restitution, a return of what was God's before, and so a type of every gift man makes to God."—*Expositor's Bible.*



Offerings of Gold and Silver.

11. **All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred.** The total of the vessels enumerated in verses 9, 10 is 2,499, or less than half this total. There is some corruption in the text, or the preceding verses omit

to mention many smaller vessels. The apocryphal book of 1 Esdras gives a total of 5,469.

Illustration. "It is almost within the lifetime of living men that all Scotland was thrilled with emotion by the discovery, in a neglected chamber, of a chest in which lay, forgotten, the crown and sceptre of the Stuarts. A like wave of feeling passed over the exiles as they had given back to their custody these temple vessels. Sacreder ones are given into our hands, to carry across a more dangerous desert. Let us hear the charge, 'Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord,' and see that we carry them, untarnished and unlost, to 'the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.'"— *Alexander Maclaren.*

ON THE WAY HOME. The apocryphal book of 1 Esdras says that the king sent a thousand horsemen with the returning exiles, a needed escort since they carried so much treasure ; the start was a joyful one, according to Esdras, with the playing of tabrets and flutes. They would need all encouragement, for it was a difficult and tedious journey. The route was "probably north and northwest along the Euphrates by Haran as far as the fords of Carchemish, and then southwest and south through the territory of the old kingdoms of Hamath, Syria, and Samaria."— *Cambridge Bible.* This route would avoid the desert, in the main. If they pressed straight westward, by Tadmor (Palmyra), they had a shorter journey — of eight hundred miles — but one bristling with hardships. The joy of these returning exiles is beautifully expressed in Ps. 126 : 1–3 :

> "When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion
> We were like unto them that dream.
> Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
> And our tongue with singing :
> Then said they among the nations,
> Jehovah hath done great things for them.
> Jehovah hath done great things for us,
> Whereof we are glad."

THE WORKINGS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE. "God sees the result from the beginning, even as at the first the eye of the artist beholds the finished statue in the rough block of marble ; and all the afflictions which he sends are but like the hammer-strokes of the sculptor, each of which removes some imperfection or brings some new loveliness to view."— *William M. Taylor.* Thus the Hebrews lost in their exile in a heathen land their tendency to idolatry, growing so heartily sick of it that they never sinned in that way again. Thus our captivities, to sickness or failure or loss, put an end to our idolatries, of fame or money or pleasure.

"God's thoughts of peace, and not of evil, suggested the Jews' captivity for seventy years. If any of you are in trouble and sorrow to-day, do not doubt that this is sent you according to the thoughtful purpose of the Lord. The great thoughtfulness of the divine mind is exercised toward you. Every affliction is timed and measured, and every comfort is sent with a loving thoughtfulness which makes it precious in a sevenfold degree."— *C. H. Spurgeon.*

Joseph Edgar Chamberlin once wrote an instructive and entertaining volume, "The Ifs of History," in which he shows that if Themistocles had not beaten Aristides in an Athenian election the western world might have been Zoroastrian instead of Christian ; if the Moors had won the battle of Tours, Islamism might have been to-day the established religion of all Europe ; if King Ethelred of England had not married the Norman Emma, William the Conqueror might not have subjugated England and remade it what it is ; if Columbus had not been turned southwestward by a flight of birds, he would have landed near South Carolina, the United States might have been settled by the Latin rather than the English races, and have been Catholic rather than Protestant. And so through a long succession of little "chances," any one of which would have changed the history of the world. No one can study history and not recognize God's providential leading in human affairs.

> "In the great world there are no accidents :
> Enthroned above the ages' ebb and flow,
> Unseen, misunderstood,
> God rules, who in all seasons and events,
> Through fiery evil and o'erwhelming woe
> Forever works the good."
>
> — *Lyman Whitney Allen.*

God's providence in this life is only the beginning of God's eternal providence. "If we be Christ's, our work does not cease when we die. It is only beginning then.

We leave behind us the implements of our toil, but we carry with us into the Unseen World the faculties which have been disciplined and strengthened here, and find for them there a fuller and freer exercise on broader and nobler fields."— *Prof. David Smith, D.D.*

Illustration. "Rabbi" Duncan, the quaint old professor of Hebrew in the New College, Edinburgh, once greeted his students after the Christmas vacation thus: "Many will be wishing you a happy New Year at this time. Gentlemen, I wish you a happy Eternity."

LESSON VI (32). — August 6.

THE TEMPLE REBUILT AND DEDICATED. — Ezra 3 : 1—6 : 22.

PRINT Ezra 3 : 10–13; 6 : 14–16.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah.* — Ps. 84 : 2.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 100.
Reference Material : Hag. 1 : 1—2 : 23; Isa. 62; Rev. 21 : 1—22 : 5.
Primary Topic : JOYFULLY BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE.
Lesson Material : Ezra 3 : 10–13; 6 : 14–16.
Memory Verse : Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise. Ps. 100 : 4.
Junior Topic : REBUILDING THE TEMPLE.
Memory Verse : Ps. 84 : 4.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: LOVE FOR GOD'S HOUSE.
Topic for Young People and Adults : WHAT GOD'S HOUSE SHOULD MEAN TO A COMMUNITY.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes. — Set before the children the picture of a church; if it is your church, so much the better. Ask them whether they have ever seen a church being built; if so, let them tell about it. Ask them what was the greatest church ever built. The temple in Jerusalem. Why? Discuss this point. Have any of them ever seen a church burned down? That is what happened to Solomon's great temple, the wonder of the world. How was it burned down? Go on to the story of the rebuilding and close with the thought that each of them is helping to build a church if he is doing anything to promote the church work, as by attending the church services and listening carefully.

The Older Classes. — Divide the class into two parts, one of which will answer questions about the historical part of the lesson and the other half will apply those facts to the present day; for instance, how the temple was destroyed and how modern churches are ruined; how the foundations of the second temple were laid and what a modern church is built upon; gifts to the temple and gifts to our modern churches; service for the temple and for our modern churches; enemies of the temple and foes of the church to-day; showing love for the temple and cultivating and manifesting love for our own house of God.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher dates the founding of the second temple B. C. 537, and its dedication B. C. 516.

Place. — The temple hill, Mount Moriah (Mount Zion), in Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Musical instruments employed in the temple.
Distinction between priests and Levites.
Comparison of the first and second temples.
The Samaritans.
The work of Haggai and Zechariah.
Dedications of the first and second temples.
Bible teachings in regard to God's house.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Love for God's House.

I. THE SECOND TEMPLE BEGUN, Ezra 3 : 1–13.
The roll of the returned exiles.
Religious services re-established.
The foundations laid.
Weeping and rejoicing.
What God's house should mean to a community.

II. The Work Hindered, Ezra 4 : 1—6 : 13.
An offer refused.
A crafty letter.
The building intermitted.
The work of Haggai and Zechariah.
The decree of Cyrus found.
New encourragement.

III. The Second Temple Completed, Ezra 6 : 14–22.
"Builded and prospered."
The joyful dedication.
The happy passover.
Our love for God's house.

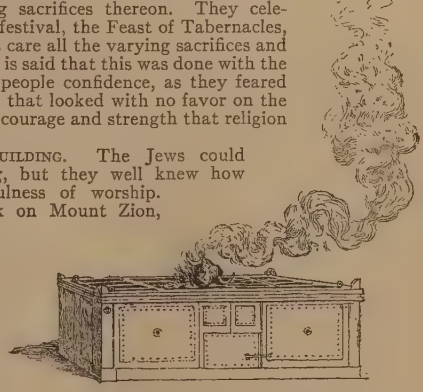
THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Brady's *Sermons, Second Series.* Morrison's *The Unlighted Lustre* and *The Footsteps of the Flock.* Matheson's *Messages of Hope.* Hugh Black's "*According to My Gospel.*" MacArthur's *Calvary Pulpit.* Phillips Brooks's *The Light of the World.* Goss's *Hits and Misses.* Works on the prophets, by Fowler, Eiselen, Davidson, Duhm, George Adam Smith, W. Robertson Smith, etc.

Ezra 3 : 10. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of A'-säph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel.

I. **THE SECOND TEMPLE BEGUN,** Ezra 3 : 1–13. The Roll of the Returned Exiles. How delightful it would be if we knew the stories back of the names in Ezra 2! Each name involves a meaningful history, just as each name of the Mayflower's passenger list does. The Nehemiah and Mordecai of the list are not the famous men of those names. Jeshua is the Joshua of Haggai and Zechariah, the high priest of the return. The register gives the towns of the exiles, as that 123 came back to Bethlehem, 223 back to Bethel and Ai, and 345 back to Jericho. The total was 42,360, not all of whom are enumerated in the list; possibly members of the northern tribes were not set down except in the total.

Religious Services Re-established. As soon as the sacred seventh month came, September-October, the month of the Feast of Trumpets, the Great Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles, the returned Jews reinstituted their formal worship. "As one man" they gathered in Jerusalem. Clearing away the rubbish, they rebuilt the great altar of burnt offerings that had stood in the central court of the temple, and began the regular morning and evening sacrifices thereon. They celebrated with great joy the harvest festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, and they took up again with pious care all the varying sacrifices and sacred rites. Most significantly, it is said that this was done with the immediate purpose of giving the people confidence, as they feared the hostile inhabitants of the land that looked with no favor on the returned exiles. They needed the courage and strength that religion alone can give.


Altar of Burnt Offerings.

Preparations for Temple-Building. The Jews could worship God without a building, but they well knew how necessary a building was to fulness of worship. Therefore they set men to work on Mount Zion, quarrying the stone for the new temple, and masons cutting the blocks. They sent to Tyre and Zidon for cedar lumber from the great forests of Mount Lebanon, paying for it with grain and wine, and with olive oil, much used in those dry countries to rub on the body and keep the skin soft. Phœnicia was a small country and could not raise enough to supply its needs. The timber was bound into rafts and towed down the coast to Joppa, Palestine's only harbor, whence it was brought overland the thirty-five miles to Jerusalem. The willingness of the Jews to spend so much from their scanty resources to erect God's house speaks volumes for their religious zeal.

10. **And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah.** By the builders is meant the workmen, not Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the high priest and the other leaders of the work. **They set the priests in their apparel.**

11. And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, *saying*, For he is good, for his lovingkindness *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid.

From Calmet.

Priest with a Censer.

"They" cannot mean the workmen, but is probably a general term, an indefinite subject. "Then were stationed the priests in their white linen robes of office." The priests' apparel is described in Ex. 28 : 40–43 ; 39 : 27–29. One hundred of these garments had recently been provided (Ezra 2 : 69). **With trumpets.** The sacred trumpets which the priests alone were allowed to blow. These trumpets were of silver, were narrow, straight, and not quite a yard long. They served as our church bells, to summon the people to worship. **And the Levites the sons of Asaph.** Asaph was a Levite of the time of David who sounded cymbals before the ark when it was carried from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem, and afterwards he was given permanently the same work in the tabernacle services. His family was one of the three finally assigned to conduct the music of the services. One hundred and twenty-eight singers of this family returned from Babylon (Ezra 2 : 41). Twelve of the Psalms are attributed to Asaph, Ps. 50 and Psalms 73–83. **With cymbals.** The Levites were assigned by David to furnish the instrumental music of the sanctuary, and the cymbals especially were played by the sons of Asaph. Cymbals were regarded as an instrument of less dignity than the trumpet, which the priests blew. They were in two parts, of silver or brass with handles in the center, and were struck against each other like our modern cymbals to accentuate music. **To praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel.** The great poet-king of the Jews set in order the musical portions of the tabernacle service, greatly enriching them. This new temple service seems to have fallen short of "the order of David" by omitting psalteries and harps (see 1 Chron. 15 : 16–21 ; Ps. 137 : 2).

11. **And they sang one to another.** "Jewish music lacked harmony and counterpoint, but in some degree it made up by a large measure of antiphonal singing, one portion of the choir singing one part of a verse, the other singing the remainder. See Ps. 136, in which each verse has two sections." — *New Century Bible.* Other psalms that could readily be sung antiphonally are 24 : 7–10 ; 106 ; 107; 118. **In praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah.** "Praising" is the verb found in "hallelujah," "praise ye Yah" (for Yahweh, Jehovah). The Hebrew word translated "giving thanks" means primarily stretching forth the hands in worship. **Saying, For he is good.** They may have sung Ps. 136, but more likely this was a common liturgical refrain among the Jews, evidence of which is seen in 1 Chron. 16 : 41 ; 2 Chron. 5 : 13 ; 7 : 3 ; 20 : 21 ; Jer. 33 : 11, as well as conspicuously in Ps. 136. **For his lovingkindness endureth for ever toward Israel.** Ps. 136 "proved so popular, because so comprehensive and so simple, that it, or the response after each of its verses, was called 'The Great Hallel,' and that name was sometimes given to the whole group of psalms ending with this (120–137)." — *Rev. William E. Barton, D.D.* **And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah.** "Shouting on occasions of secular joy and triumph has been practised by most nations, both in ancient and modern times. But religious shouting is less common. Still we hear of such shouting when the ark of the covenant was taken into the Israelite camp near

12. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' *houses*, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice ; and many shouted aloud for joy :

Aphek (1 Sam. 4 : 5), and again when David solemnly brought it up from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6 : 15). Shouting appears also in the Psalms (47 : 5) and in Zechariah (4 : 7) in connection with religion. It is always indicative of religious joy." — *Rawlinson.* **Because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid.** The foundation, though hidden, is the most important part of any building. In rearing the great steel-frame office buildings of modern days as much time and pains are often spent in constructing the foundation as in building all the edifice above ground. Sometimes, to reach solid rock, concrete or steel pillars must be sunk through a hundred feet or more of quicksand.

12. **But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses.** The priests, who were Levites, performed the most important parts of the temple services and offered the sacrifices. The ordinary Levites were their assistants. The "heads of fathers' houses" were the heads of the families that made up the clans, these in turn making up the tribes. **The old men that had seen the first house.** Solomon's temple had been destroyed only fifty years before ; many of the returned exiles must have remembered it well. **When the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes.** The temple hill must have seemed distressingly bare, shorn of the imposing and splendid walls which had risen there in their youth. Now there were only a few courses of stone and confused heaps of building material. **Wept with a loud voice.** "It was 'the day of small things' (Zech. 4 : 10). The new house, in comparison with the old one, was 'as nothing' (Hag. 2 : 3). The difference was perhaps not so much in the dimensions as in the size and quality of the foundation-stones (1 Kings 5 : 17), the excellence of the masonry, and the like. Solomon had employed the best workmen of one of the greatest of the Tyrian kings ; Zerubbabel had only the arms of his own subjects to depend upon."—*Pulpit Commentary.* "There are some people who always find the discouraging side of life, not the happy, cheerful side. These people miss the lovely features in every landscape. Where others see roses, they see thorns. While others sing, they murmur and complain. Not only do they spoil life for themselves by this pessimistic way of seeing things, but they spoil it for others."—*J. R. Miller.* "Ye who have looked upon a former temple and find it all-glorious, do not let retrospect banish prospect! Fold hope in the arms of memory!" — *George Matheson.* **And many shouted aloud for joy.** That is the way to do when the pessimists are wailing, try to drown their lamentations with bursts of good cheer!

Dedicating the Temple.

13. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

13. **So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people.** In western lands the weeping would be silent, but lamentations in the East are accompanied by shrill cries and loud wailing, which in this case were as loud as the shouts of joy, and inextricably mingled with them. **For the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.** Thus Herodotus (IX, 24), speaking of the lament of the Persians for a lost general, says that it "resounded throughout all Bœotia."

WHAT GOD'S HOUSE SHOULD MEAN TO A COMMUNITY. It may be a very humble church, and yet a noble spiritual temple may grow out of it. The returned Jews began with only an altar, but "as every tier was laid, it was laid in the faith of a temple yet to be. To the eye of sense there was but an altar there, but the builders had the temple before them all the time." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

"To-day it is hard to find any country which is the home of man wherein the Christian church has not laid the corner-stones of its truth and lifted the spire of its hope. It is the most glorious because the most natural, the most natural because the most glorious, of all the associations and institutions of mankind." — *Phillips Brooks.*

"When you stop the birds building nests, the beavers dams, the coral insects islands, and men and women homes to shelter their own heads and protect the tender forms of their offspring, you may hope to have them cease the erection of temples for the worship of God." — *Rev. Charles Frederic Goss, D.D.*

"It should mean much that a man is a member of Christ's church. Do men take knowledge of you, my beloved church, that you have been with Jesus? Not stone and wood alone would we dedicate to Almighty God, but ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, living temples for the living God." — *Rev. R. S. MacArthur, D.D.*

"A city may sooner be built without ground on which to fix it, than a community be constituted without religion, or being so constituted be preserved." — *Plutarch*

God's house is the salvation of a community (1) socially, giving an uplifting meeting-place; (2) mentally, forcing the people to use their minds on the greatest themes; (3) morally, holding up standards of noble living; (4) spiritually, presenting Jesus Christ, the only Saviour, the eternal hope of lost men.

II. **THE WORK HINDERED,** Ezra 4 : 1 — 6 : 13. AN OFFER REFUSED. Hardly was the work of temple-building started before it met with severe opposition. Samaria, the central region of Palestine, was peopled with a mixed population, made up of Jews not carried into exile, and of colonists whom the Assyrians had brought there. The latter were of course idolaters, and the people of the Northern Kingdom had always been more inclined to Phœnician and other idolatries than the people of Judah. These Samaritans were far more numerous and powerful than the returned exiles, so when they offered to join them in building the temple their offer was promptly and emphatically rejected, first, on the ground that Cyrus's permission to build was given to the exiles only; second (and this reason was not expressed), because if they were admitted, the pure religion of Jehovah would soon become defiled and the political and social existence of the new Jewish state would be jeopardized. The refusal seems at first sight churlish and bigoted; the more it is studied, the wiser and more necessary it appears. It is the everlasting duty of God's children to keep themselves and their work from the contagion of worldliness.

A CRAFTY LETTER. The Persian kings following Cyrus were, in order, Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis (who reigned only seven months), Darius Hystaspes (the second founder of the empire), Xerxes (Ahasuerus), and Artaxerxes Longimanus. Darius favored the Jews, but his successors did not. The Samaritans used hired advocates to misrepresent the Jews at the Persian court, and prevent their building the temple. One of their devices is given in full (though it probably belongs to a much later date), a letter written to Artaxerxes in the name of nine nationalities in Samaria, and others, charging the returned exiles with being rebels at heart, and desiring to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls in order that they may be strong enough to avoid paying tribute to the king. Reference was made to the ancient revolts of Jerusalem, which the king could read about in the Babylonian records. It was a shrewd and mischievous letter.

THE BUILDING INTERMITTED. The Persian kings were deceived by such devices and ordered the work on the temple to cease. But when Darius Hystaspes came to

Ezra 6 : 14. And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Hăg'-gāi the prophet and Zĕch-ă-rī'-ăh the son of Ĭd'-dō. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Ăr-tăx-ẽrx'-ēs king of Persia.

the throne, the Jews found an opportunity as favorable as Cyrus had given them. They were slow to take advantage of it, but were stimulated by their religious leaders.

THE WORK OF HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH. Our Bible has preserved for us the stirring messages of both these prophets. They began to teach in the second year of King Darius, and both of them earnestly urged the Jews to proceed with the rebuilding of the temple. "As far as we can gather from the remains of Haggai's addresses, he was a man of direct and practical nature who knew how to get things done." — *Prof. Henry T. Fowler.* Zechariah was the son of a priest and probably a young man at this time. "Zechariah differs widely from the prophets who preceded him in three points : (1) in the emphasis which he places upon visions as a means of divine communication ; (2) in the apocalyptic symbolism that enters into the visions ; (3) in the large place occupied by angelic mediation in his intercourse with Jehovah." — *Prof. F. C. Eiselen.* Also, Zechariah was a fervent prophet of the Messiah.

THE DECREE OF CYRUS FOUND. Urged on by these two prophets, and directed by the governor and the high priest, the workers again addressed themselves to their great task. But again they were interrupted, this time by Tattenai, satrap of the province of Syria and Cilicia, ruler over Zerubbabel. Tattenai asked Zerubbabel for his authority in the matter, but he allowed the building to continue while an appeal could be made to Darius. The result of this appeal was the discovery in Ecbatana, a city of Media, of Cyrus's original permit to build the temple, the precious document having been transferred there, probably, with other valuable records for safe keeping during the short and disturbed reign of Pseudo-Smerdis. Therefore Tattenai was ordered to let the work proceed without hindrance.

NEW ENCOURAGEMENT. In addition to this renewed permission, in a very emphatic and explicit decree the king ordered Tattenai to take some of the money due Darius in taxes and use it to help defray the cost of building the temple, and also to provide animals for the burnt offerings — bullocks, rams, and lambs — and wheat, salt, wine, and oil for the meal offerings, to be given to the priests of Jerusalem daily, that they might offer sacrifices for Darius and his sons, and pray for them. If any one obstructed the decree, he was to be impaled upon a timber from his own house ! This decree, as may well be imagined, put an effectual end to all opposition. The entire course of this history illustrates God's providence watching over his people and his house.

III. **THE SECOND TEMPLE COMPLETED,** Ezra 6 : 14–22. 14. **And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered.** These elders were probably the same as the "heads of fathers' houses" of Ezra 3 : 12, and included Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the high priest. They are said to "build" because they directed the work, while doubtless the actual labor was mostly performed by younger men. **Through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo.** These two prophets aided the work in very different ways, but each most efficiently. Haggai was a whip, spurring the people to the task with sarcasm and threats, warnings, reproaches, and burning exhortations, as well as by promises of the future glory of the new temple. Zechariah, on the contrary, brought to the workers calm strength and faith by means of his beautiful visions, showing them the angels watching for the finishing of the temple and ministering comfort to their sorrows. **And they builded and finished it.** How much of our building for God starts out with an ambitious foundation, but we never get to the roof ! It is only the finished buildings that count. **According to the commandment of the God of Israel.** It was God's *commandment* but, as the verse goes on to say, the king's *decree.* All human orders are as nought, lacking God's command ; and that command is enough, whether human decrees follow it or not. **And according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.** The historian has already given the decrees of Cyrus and Darius (Ezra 1 : 3 ; 6 : 3–5, 7); the only Artaxerxes mentioned (Ezra 4 : 7–22), who reigned between Cyrus and Darius, forbade the prosecution of the work. Some time after the temple was completed, however, an Artaxerxes reigned who was a great friend of the Jews and who gave orders for the adorning of the temple. He is probably the

15. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Ā'-dăr, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

16. And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

---

one named here by anticipation, and in order to bring together the three great royal promoters of the temple-building.

15. **And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar.** The twelfth month of the Jews, our February-March. **Which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.** Haggai 1 : 15 states that the work was begun, after the intermission, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month (September) in the second year of Darius, so that this, the main part of the work, was done in nearly four and a half years. But the foundation was laid (Ezra 3 : 8) twenty years before the building was finished.

16. **And the children of Israel.** All the Jews, for there was no longer a North and a South. Also, it seems that some from the Northern Kingdom had returned with this first body of exiles. **The priests and the Levites.** These presided over the ceremonies. **And the rest of the children of the captivity.** We see how important the priests and Levites were held to be, no other classes of the people being mentioned. **Kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.** There is no more mention of the weeping. Let us hope that the weepers, after their burst of grief, had decided to take the manlier course and make the best of present conditions. Many of them, of course, had died during the years in which the work was forbidden.

THE HAPPY PASSOVER. The animals offered at the dedication were few in number, hundreds compared with the thousands sacrificed when Solomon's temple was dedicated (1 Kings 8 : 63), but the spirit was just as fine ; and the sacrifices, out of their poverty, were as acceptable to God as Solomon's vastly greater sacrifices out of his immense riches. Note that twelve he-goats were offered for a sin-offering, one for each tribe of the reunited nation.

Then in the next month (March-April), the first month of the Jewish year, at the regularly appointed time, they began to keep the ancient memorial feast of God's mercy, the passover. It was indeed a joyful occasion, made still more joyful by the fact that numbers of the Jews who had not been taken into captivity, and who had fallen away to the idolatry that surrounded them in Palestine, now separated themselves from it with all its abominations, and came back again to the pure religion of Jehovah.

OUR LOVE FOR GOD'S HOUSE. How those old Jews loved God's house ! " Without Solomon's opportunity, they had to rival Solomon's achievement. The enterprise called forth the energies and the latent patriotism of the best of the people. The worthiest of the race set themselves to the task, and the flickering hope of the nation was fanned into a bright flame. Nothing seemed impossible to them in this state ; no sacrifice seemed too great to be called on to make. Their liberality kept pace with their enthusiasm." — *Prof. Hugh Black.* Thus should it be always in matters concerning God's house.

Our love for God's house should show itself in little services until there is opportunity for great ones. If the Jews had not begun with an altar they would never have got their new temple. " It is one great danger of having splendid dreams, that they make us blind to present opportunities." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

" When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to thee."

If we love God's house, we shall try to get others to go there with us. " Suppose one day you went out on Columbus Avenue and saw all the cars flying up and down and not one of them stopping at the white painted poles for passengers ; you would say the management of the company had gone mad. And yet there are plenty of so-called Christians running to and fro to church that never think of taking a passenger with them." — *Rev. James Boyd Brady, D.D.*

If we love God's house, we shall speak of it with loving enthusiasm, we shall be working for it all the week and not merely on Sunday ; our prayers for it will rise continually, and all our hopes and ambitions will center in it.

" Then rise, O Church of Christ, arise ! shake off thy slumbers now,
God's conquering strength within thy heart, his calmness on thy brow." — *E. H. Sears.*

LESSON VII (33). — August 13.

ESTHER SAVES HER PEOPLE. — Book of Esther

PRINT Esth. 4 : 10—5 : 3.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The righteous cried, and Jehovah heard,*
And delivered them out of all their troubles. — Ps. 34 : 17

Devotional Reading : Ps. 34 : 1–8.
Reference Material : Matt. 20 : 20–28 ; Rom. 5 : 6–10 ; 12 : 1, 2
Primary Topic : A Brave Young Queen.
Lesson Material : Esth. 4 : 10—5 : 3.
Memory Verse : God is my helper. Ps. 54 : 4.
Junior Topic : Esther, the Brave Queen.
Lesson Material : Esth. 4 : 10—5 : 3 ; 8 : 3–8. Print 4 : 10—5 : 3
Memory Verse: Ps. 28 : 7.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : A Heroine Worthy of Imitation.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Rendering Sacrificial Service

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will want to hear the whole story, which is so long and so full of events that most of the hour will be spent upon it. You may make it more vivid for the smallest pupils by seating a man doll, gorgeously dressed, in a tiny chair covered with velvet and having other dolls as Haman, Mordecai, and Esther, putting them into the various positions required by the story.

The Older Classes should clear up some of the points likely to be misunderstood, such as the Orientalisms, and the real religious feeling underlying the book.

In All Classes bring out the fundamental teaching of loyalty to duty and firm reliance on God. What situations to-day call upon us to imitate Esther?

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time.— Vashti was deposed (Beecher) B. C. 483, Esther made queen B. C. 479, Esther saves her people B. C. 474. Battles of Thermopylæ and Salamis, B. C. 480.

Place. — Shushan (Susa), the capital of Persia, now a great mass of ruins, including the remains of the palace of Xerxes.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Present-day Jewish feasts.
Characteristics and purpose of the book of Esther.
Evidences of religion in Esther.
Esther as an example for to-day.
Esther compared with other Bible heroines
Esther as a study in providence.

Court of a Palace.
(Persian)

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Rendering Sacrificial Service.

I. THE TERRIBLE PERIL OF THE JEWS, Esth. 1 : 1—3 : 15.
The noble Vashti.
Esther becomes queen.
Mordecai saves the king.
Haman's pride and plotting.
The temporary triumph of evil.

II. ESTHER RISES TO MEET THE PERIL, Esth. 4 : 1—5 : 14.
Great mourning among the Jews.
Esther's brave determination.
Esther's counterplot.
Haman's gallows.
Boldness in the righteous cause.

III. ESTHER'S GLORIOUS VICTORY, Esth. 6 : 1—10 : 3.
Mordecai exalted.
Esther's petition.
The stand of the Jews.
The origin of Purim.
The sure triumph of righteousness.

THE LESSON IN ART.

The story of Esther is treated in paintings and drawings by Tissot, Holbein, ("Icones"), Veronese, Tintoretto (Hampton Court and Madrid Gallery), Lucas van Leyden, Rembrandt, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Michelangelo (Sistine Chapel).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Esther from the radical viewpoint. *The International Critical Commentary* (Paton), *The New Century Bible* (Davies), *A Biblical Introduction* (Bennett and Adeney); from the conservative viewpoint, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Urquhart), *Book by Book* (Robertson), Davis's *Bible Dictionary*. *The Bible as Literature*, by Moulton and others. Moulton's *Literary Study of the Bible*. Books on women of the Bible by Whyte, Sangster, Horton, Headley, Lewis (and others), Martyn, Chadwick (and others), Broughton. Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible* and *Great Texts of the Bible*. Snell on Vashti in *Biblical Character Sketches*. *Bible Miniatures* by Amos R. Wells. Commentaries on Esther by Adeney (*Expositor's Bible*), Rawlinson (*Pulpit Commentary*), Streane (*Cambridge Bible*), Davies (*New Century Bible*), Paton, (*International Critical Commentary*), Parker (*People's Bible*), Haley, Raleigh, Ellicott, etc. William M. Taylor's *Ruth and Esther*. Lee's *Eventful Nights*. Stalker's *Men and Morals*. Spurgeon's *Sermons, Vol. 15*. Nicoll's *The Lamp of Sacrifice*. Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*. Elmslie's *Memoir and Sermons*. Hasell's *Bible Partings*. Young's *Unfamiliar Texts*. Bradlee's *Sermons* and *Sermons for the Church*. Burrell's *Wayfarers of the Bible*. *The Golden Passional*, and *For Christ's Crown*. Hugh Black's *The Gift of Influence*, *According to My Gospel*, and *Listening to God*. Talmage's *Sermons, Vol. 6* and *Women: Her Power and Privileges*. Racine's *Esther*. Poems by Quarles and Christina G. Rossetti.

Megilla—the book of Esther.

A Hebrew Manuscript, 7 feet long, 4 inches wide, written by a Jerusalem scribe. In a self-rolling olive-wood case. On the outside, beautiful carvings representing different sites in the Holy Land.

I. **THE TERRIBLE PERIL OF THE JEWS,** Esth. 1 : 1—3 : 15. THE BOOK OF ESTHER. The book of Esther belongs to the third division of the Hebrew Bible, the Hagiographa or Holy Writings, and is one of the five "rolls" appointed to be read on festivals, viz., Solomon's Song read at the Passover, Ruth read at Pentecost, Lamentations read on the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Assyrians, Ecclesiastes read during the Feast of Tabernacles, and Esther read at the Feast of Purim.

The right of Esther to a place in the Bible was for a long time disputed, because it does not mention the Deity or refer to him, nor does it say anything about Jerusalem, the temple, sacrifices, or any religious festival. The book is not quoted in the New Testament. Nevertheless, because it records the triumph of the Jews over their enemies, it came to be honored by the Jews next to the Pentateuch. By the radical critics it is regarded as merely a historical romance invented to give a patriotic meaning to the heathen feast of Purim, and written about B. C. 130 by a Jew of Persia. The conservative view is that Esther was written about B. C. 400, when the Persian empire was in its vigor, a view which numerous discoveries of unexpected historical accuracies in the book tend to confirm. The writer, in any event, is unknown.

"The book is characterized by supreme dramatic power." — *Rev. John Urquhart.* "This epic history has what may be called a double plot : two distinct trains of events, centering around Esther herself and Mordecai respectively, are woven together into a complex story." — *Prof. Richard G. Moulton.* "There are valuable moral lessons in the book ; the conduct of Esther and Mordecai would be inexplicable without a belief on their part in God's providence and a reliance on his power and faithfulness ; and the cause of the quarrel between Haman and Mordecai was the scrupulous regard of the latter for his own religion." — *Prof. James Robertson.*

THE NOBLE VASHTI. Xerxes I, who reigned over the kingdom of Persia B. C. 485–465, was also called Ahasuerus, as the inscriptions prove. He was the powerful king who led against Greece an expedition numbering (according to Herodotus)

2,500,000, and was wonderfully defeated in the battle of Salamis. His sway extended from India to Ethiopia, over 127 provinces (sub-satrapies). In character he was vain, ambitious, proud, tyrannical, and sensual, just as he is depicted in this book.

The story opens in the third year of his reign, in his palace in Shushan (Susa), his capital, where he was making a great feast one hundred and eighty days long for all the princes and royal officers of his extended kingdom; perhaps they came by groups. At the close of this splendid entertainment, for seven days the royal gardens, gorgeously decorated, were thrown open to a general throng of non-official guests and visitors. At the same time in another part of the palace Vashti the queen gave a feast for the women.

Wine flowed freely, and many became tipsy, including Xerxes himself. At the height of the carousing it occurred to the king to send for his beautiful queen that his drunken guests might gaze upon her loveliness. Vashti, with a courage and independence for which she is to be held in everlasting honor, refused to obey the disgraceful command. Then a comic debate arose among those befuddled wine-bibbers. They decided that this example of wifely insubordination must be punished or it would spread, and they solemnly decided that Vashti should be deposed from her royal estate and another made queen in her stead, and that a proclamation should be made requiring all wives to honor their husbands, "both great and small," and that "every man should bear rule in his own house"! This absurdity was carried out, and the self-respecting Vashti disappeared from the palace of Xerxes, doubtless heartily glad to leave it.

"Woman has a soul which is her own, and unless she honors her life she will not win the best that God has put into life. Jesus Christ recalled men to self-respect, and in that same hour they began to be saved." — *Bernard J. Snell.*

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power."

Esther Becomes Queen. King Xerxes, of course, could not be left without a queen, and his courtiers suggested a plan that must have pleased him, namely, that all the most beautiful maidens of his realm should be brought to Susa, and that he should select a queen from among them. The king eagerly assented, and the maidens were collected from far and near. Among them was Esther, a Jewish orphan girl brought up by her cousin Mordecai, evidently much older than she, as his daughter. They belonged to the captives from Judah, but Mordecai had his young cousin conceal her race. "It was not ambition merely that moved Mordecai. He had been meditating upon the unfolding providence of God to his scattered nation, and felt that there was deeper meaning in passing events than the pleasures and anger of his sovereign." — *P. C. Headley.*

"Esther" means "a star"; she was also called Hadassah ("myrtle"), and it is not certain which was her original name. Her loveliness of face and character so moved upon the officer in charge of the girls that he advanced her turn, and gave her the best place in the house of the women. It was, however, three years after the deposing of Vashti that Esther was summoned to the king, because Xerxes had been absent on his ill-fated expedition to Greece; but when at last he saw the young Jewess, fair of form and brilliant of mind, he at once fell in love with her and chose her for his queen, making a splendid feast to announce his selection.

"What a leap this was. In such a short time she went from a poor, despised Jewish peasant woman to the throne of the greatest empire in existence." — *Rev. Len G. Broughton.* But "Esther is a heroine — capable, energetic, brave, and patriotic. The splendor of her career is seen in this very fact, that she does not succumb to the luxury of her surroundings." — *Prof. W. F. Adeney.*

Mordecai Saves the King. Mordecai seems to have been a porter at the main entrance of the palace. While there he overheard two of the palace eunuchs plotting to kill the king. "The 'threshold' which these eunuchs guarded was presumably the entrance to the king's private apartments. They were the most trusted watchmen, and therefore their treason was doubly dangerous." — *Prof. L. B. Paton* Mordecai told Esther of the plot, Esther told the king, the information was verified and the two plotters were hanged. Years afterward Xerxes was slain in just such a plot. A record was made of this event, but Mordecai was not rewarded; he remained a humble porter at the palace gate. But all good deeds are rewarded in time, as Mordecai was to discover.

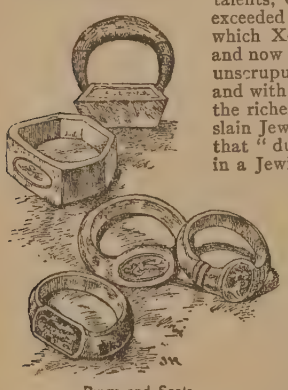
Haman's Pride and Plotting. Haman was a descendant of King Agag the Amalekite (1 Sam. 15), and therefore an hereditary enemy of all Jews. Xerxes pro

Esth. 4 : 10. Then Esther spake unto Hā'-thăch, and gave him a message unto Môr'-dĕ-cāi, *saying :*

moted him to be prime minister, and bade all his servants to prostrate themselves before him ; but the independent Mordecai stoutly refused to do this. His fellow servants remonstrated with him with no result, so that at last they called Haman's attention to Mordecai. Full of wrath, the prime minister sought to take vengeance not only on Mordecai, but on all the Jews in the entire kingdom, knowing that thus he would punish Mordecai most bitterly. There are numerous illustrations of such cruelty in history, " as the great massacre of the Magi at the accession of Darius I, and the slaughter of the Scythians about a century earlier. One may refer to the butchery of whole hordes of Jews in quite recent times in Russia and elsewhere." — *New Century Bible.*

His mind being made up, the next step in those superstitious days was to fix on a lucky day for the undertaking. It is probable that Haman, using " Pur," that is, lots, put into a box twelve lots marked from 1 to 12, and drew out the one marked 12, which meant the twelfth month. By the same process he fixed on the thirteenth day of the month.

The next step was to get Xerxes to consent to the massacre, which he did by the common Oriental method of a direct bribe, offering the immense sum of ten thousand talents, or about $16,800,000. This enormous sum was exceeded by the gift of $22,500,000 offered by Pythius which Xerxes refused ; but that was early in his reign and now his treasury was depleted by the Greek war, so he unscrupulously accepted the bribe, gave Haman his signet, and with it the full authority to work his cruel will. From the riches that Haman would reap in the property of the slain Jews he would easily pay the bribe. It is no wonder that " during the dramatic reading of the book of Esther in a Jewish synagogue at the Feast of Purim, the congregation may be found taking the part of a chorus and exclaiming at every mention of the name of Haman, ' May his name be blotted out,' ' Let the name of the ungodly perish,' while boys with mallets will pound stones and bits of wood on which the odious name is written." — *Expositor's Bible.*



Rings and Seals.

THE TEMPORARY TRIUMPH OF EVIL. " This story shows us the real misery of the world's favorites. They are at the top of the ladder which other men are struggling to climb ; but they own that they find it an uneasy eminence. They are tormented by the fear of losing what they have, and yet its possession does not make them happy. There is always something which they think spoils their pleasure, some Mordecai to be got out of the way. To them the world's banqueting-house may be very brilliant, but it is not the abode of real contentment. Ah, would that they would leave it for that better banqueting-house where the King of kings entertains his guests." — *E. J. Hasell.*

II. ESTHER RISES TO MEET THE PERIL, Esth. 4 : 1—5 : 14. GREAT MOURNING AMONG THE JEWS. Like Nero carousing while Rome was burning, the king and Haman were holding a drunken revel while the Jews throughout Shushan were wailing in agony. Mordecai himself tore his clothes, put on coarse cloth of goats' hair or camels' hair, and strewed ashes on his head, all signs of intense grief ; then he stood outside the palace entrance, through which no one in such mourning garb might enter.

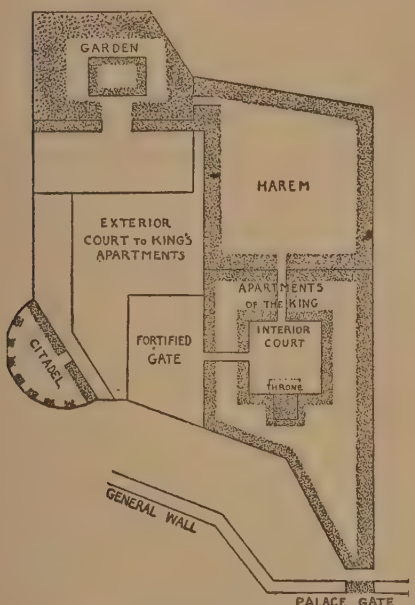
Esther soon heard of this, and sent raiment to Mordecai so that he might enter the palace grounds ; but he refused it, and sent word to her by her messenger, telling her of the destruction threatened her race, and begging her to obtain mercy from Xerxes.

ESTHER'S BRAVE DETERMINATION. 10. **Then Esther spake unto Hathach.** Hathach was the chamberlain (man-servant or eunuch) whom Esther had sent to Mordecai. **And gave him a message unto Mordecai.** Of course it was out of the question

11. All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except those to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live : but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12. And they told to Môr'-dĕ-cāi Esther's words.

13. Then Môr'-dĕ-cāi bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.



Plan of Xerxes' Palace.

Discovered at Susa and Excavated by M. Dieulafoy.

The feast was held in the garden. Esther's home was in the harem opening into the garden. Xerxes sat on the throne in the interior court when Esther approached him. She stood at the interior court end of the passageway between the harem and the throne room, when Xerxes held out his golden scepter to her. Modecai's place was by the palace gate.

for Esther to leave the palace to go to the public square where Mordecai stood.

11. **All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces.** The king's servants means those in immediate attendance on the king, "the people of the provinces" means those in his most distant domains : "all people, both far and near." **Do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court.** The palace had an "outer court" (Esth. 6 : 4) and an "inner court" from which the throne room was visible. **Who is not called.** "The law that no one might approach the king without summons was designed to give dignity to his person and to protect him from assassination."—*International Critical Commentary.* **There is one law for him, that he be put to death.** Herodotus states this law, but says that a person might send in a message to the king and request an audience. Esther, however, was not in the king's favor at the time, and did not dare to do this. **Except to those to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre.** The king is always represented on the monuments as holding in his hand "a long tapering rod with a head-like ornament at one end and a loop at the other."—*New Century Bible.* This is doubtless his golden sceptre. **But I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.** It is probable that some other woman had become the favorite of the fickle and sensual monarch.

12. **And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.** Hathach drops abruptly out of the story, and Jewish commentators infer that Haman had had him slain.

13. **Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther.** "Mordecai contemplated this bitter necessity. He gazed upon it till his eyes were a fountain of tears. He studied the situation till the iron entered into his very soul. Then he made his appeal to Queen Esther to stand forward as the savior of her people."—*Hastings.* **Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the**

14. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish : and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this ?

15. Then Esther bade them return answer unto Môr'-dĕ-cāi,

16. Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shu'-shăn, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day : I also and my maidens will fast in like manner ; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

Jews. Esther thus far, following Mordecai's instructions, had concealed the fact that she was a Jewess, but Mordecai was sure that in the wholesale massacre that was planned the fact would come out. Perhaps Haman had discovered the relationship between Esther and Mordecai.

14. **For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time.** "We may fail in our duty by simply being silent. The silence to which Esther was tempted was the silence of expediency, of selfishness, of slothfulness. We need to remember George Meredith's grand words, 'Expediency is man's wisdom, doing right is God's.'" — *Dinsdale T. Young.* **Then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.** God is not shut up to the use of one agent. God designs for each man his honorable part in the progress of his kingdom, but if that man fails, his glorious chance will be given to another. Remember E. R. Sill's fine poem of the coward in battle who excused himself from fighting by wishing that he had a sharper sword such as the king's son carried — "But this blunt thing!" So he snapped his sword in two, flung it away, and crept off into safety.

> "Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
> And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
> Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
> And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout
> Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,
> And saved a great cause that heroic day."

Read also Browning's fine poem, "The Lost Leader":

> "We shall march prospering,— not through his presence ;
> Songs may inspirit us,— not from his lyre ;
> Deeds will be done,— while he boasts his quiescence,
> Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire."

But thou and thy father's house will perish. Mordecai adds the appeal so weighty with a Jew, regard for the family : Esther's failure to act would involve the destruction not only of herself but of Mordecai, who had been a father to her, and of all the other members of her family. **And who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this ?** Mordecai adds the solemn appeal of God's providential leading. It was for this precise emergency that Esther had been raised to the throne of the Persian kingdom. "These words instantly lit the whole career of Esther with a new and solemn meaning." — *J. E. McFayden.* It is a great thing to realize that one's life is a part, and a vital part, of God's everlasting and all-embracing purpose, and this proud realization may come to any soul.

15. **Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai.** "She was asked to go in and tell the king what he did not yet know, that she herself was one of the despised and hated race. She was asked to incur the risk of disgrace, and, not improbably, of a sharp and cruel death. On her decision hung the fate of those two millions. It was but a forlorn hope, the chances were that she would fail and fall with the rest of them. But no matter! There are things dearer than life." —*Rev. J. G. Greenhough.*

16. **Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan.** There must have been many of them, since they could slay three hundred men (Esth. 9 : 15). **And fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day.** Fasting was a religious exercise, a means of seeking the mercy of God. It implied prayer and was always linked with it. Nor is this the only evidence of the religious spirit underlying this book. "It has been supposed that Esther could not have meant an absolute fast — complete abstinence from both food and drink — for so long a period as three days ; but Oriental abstemiousness would not be very severely taxed by a fast of this length. The time intended — from the evening of the first to the morning of the

17. So Môr'-dĕ-cāi went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Esth. 5 : 1. Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house : and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the entrance of the house.

---

third day — need not have much exceeded thirty-six hours." — *Rawlinson.* **I also and my maidens will fast in like manner.** Esther trusted in God to move Xerxes rather than her own beauty, or she would not have lessened the full force of the latter by fasting. **And so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law.** "Never was there a note of higher courage than Esther's message to her cousin." — *Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D.*

"Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labor as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.

"Knowledge we ask not — knowledge Thou hast lent,
But, Lord, the will — there lies our bitter need ;
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed." — *John Drinkwater.*

And if I perish, I perish. "Nehemiah, though a courageous man and a favorite of his royal master, was filled with apprehension at the prospect of a far less dangerous interview with a much more reasonable ruler than the half-mad Xerxes. These Oriental autocrats were shrouded in the terror of divinities. Their absolute power left the lives of all who approached them at the mercy of their caprice. Ahasuerus had just sanctioned a senseless, bloodthirsty decree. Very possibly he had murdered Vashti, and that on the offence of a moment. Esther was Fatima risking the wrath of Bluebeard." — *Walter F. Adeney.* **So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.** Under the circumstances, though Mordecai had no authority to call the Jews together and order the fast, they would be glad to obey him. Of course he did not say that he was acting upon the command of the queen.

5 : 1. **Now it came to pass on the third day.** As it was on the third day since the fasting began, the fasting did not last three whole days. **That Esther put on her royal apparel.** "Esther came forth among her attendants with a countenance from which every trace of fear and sorrow had vanished ; and having arrayed herself in the queenly robes which so well became her rare loveliness, she sought the presence of her dreaded lord." — *Mrs. S. T. Martyn.* **And stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house.** "The king's house" means the king's private apartments, well fenced in from unwarranted intrusion. **And the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house.** "In a Persian pillared hall the place for the throne would be at the further end, midway between the side walls. The throne would be elevated on steps, and would command a view down the midmost avenue of columns to the main entrance, which would commonly occupy that posi-

Esther before the King.

2. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight ; and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther ? and what is thy request ? it shall be given thee even to the half of the kingdom.

---

tion." — *Rawlinson.*

2. **When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court.** "Young, fair, resplendent with royal garments, she stands silent where the king may see her." — *Hastings.* Doubtless she was praying fervently. **That she obtained favor in his sight.** The sight of her face brought back all the king's love for her ; and may we not believe that God inclined his heart toward her ? **And the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand.** "The crisis is past ; Israel is saved !" — *Hastings.* **So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.** This seems to have been the usual gesture which accepted the king's grace, binding as it were the covenant between them.

3. **Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther ? and what is thy request ?** Xerxes understood well what risk Esther had run, and knew that some powerful desire must have impelled her. It was surely no idle whim. **It shall be given thee even to the half of the kingdom.** Thus also Herod Antipas, Mark 6 : 23. Herodotus says there was one day in the year on which the king was bound to grant any request proffered by a guest at his table. Such grants in the dark are common among Oriental rulers.

ESTHER'S COUNTERPLOT. "It would have been most unwise for Esther to have burst out with her daring plea for the condemned people in the moment of the king's surprised welcome." — *Adeney.* So she merely preferred the flattering request that the king and Haman should come to a banquet that she had prepared for them. Haman went home proud as Lucifer, boasting to his wife what a favorite he was with the queen, but peevishly adding that all this availed nothing while he had to pass by Mordecai at the entrance of the palace, and get no obeisance from him. "Get a gallows ready for the churl," urged his obsequious wife and friends, so forthwith Haman had a gallows erected seventy-five feet high, intending on the morrow to get the king's permission to hang Mordecai on it.

BOLDNESS IN THE RIGHTEOUS CAUSE. "We are all tempted every day to say, 'If I only were Esther ! If I only had a great opportunity, would I not rise to it ?' Our opportunities may not be so far-reaching or so high-sounding as some other men's are ; but they are our opportunities, and our opportunities are life or death to us and to others." — *Rev. Alexander Whyte, D.D.*

Esther is an example of intercessory prayer. "Observe the bended form of this suppliant queen. Here is the noblest attitude of human nature, to bow before the throne of heavenly grace in behalf of others." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

"We cannot hold back from Christ's cause with impunity. It can do without us, but we cannot do without it." — *Prof. James Stalker.*

"No man can ever choose the path of right, of heroism, of goodness, of duty, till he sees and feels himself in God's big world, and with God above him up in heaven !" — *Prof. W. G. Elmslie.*

"There are times when to be heroic is true prudence, when to venture nobly is to be doubly safe." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

III. **ESTHER'S GLORIOUS VICTORY,** Esth. 6 : 1 — 10 : 3. MORDECAI EXALTED. Now the triple plot begins to be unravelled, and Mordecai first gets his deserts. No finer example of the irony of fate is to be found in all history than this event. Xerxes, wakeful in the night, has the records of his reign read to him and hears how Mordecai had disclosed the plot against his life ; also that Mordecai had not been rewarded. Haman, come to ask permission to hang Mordecai, is in the court. The king invites him to come in. "What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor ?" asks the monarch. "This is my chance," thinks Haman, "for of course he means *me* !" So he suggests royal apparel, a royal crown, and a royal procession through the city. "Good !" cried Xerxes. "Make haste to do all this — *for Mordecai the Jew !*" No wonder that Haman, after carrying out his own suggestion with a wry face, went to his home in the gloomiest of moods.

Esther's Petition. With wonderful patience and prudence Esther did not present her petition at the first banquet, feeling that Xerxes was not quite ready for it, but gave a second feast for her husband and Haman. Then, when Xerxes, in wonder at her waiting, pressed her for her petition, she begged for her life and the life of her people. "Who has dared threaten you?" thundered the king. "*This wicked Haman*," answered Esther. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen, and with good reason. He was hurried out, and hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. To Mordecai, moreover, were given all of Haman's possessions.

The Stand of the Jews. This is the climax of the book for most of us, but for the Jew the climax is in the triumph of the Jewish race over their foes. The king's decree, indeed, could not be reversed, but on the day set for their destruction, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, they were allowed by a supplementary decree to avenge themselves on all their enemies. This they did with a will, killing five hundred in Shushan's fortified quarter (the "palace"), three hundred in the civilian quarter of Shushan, and seventy-five thousand in the provinces. Those were bloody days, and the spirit even of God's people was far from the spirit of Christianity.

The Origin of Purim. The rest of the book explains the origin in these events of the Jewish Feast of Purim or Lots. This festival is still observed by the Jews, and on two days, the fourteenth and fifteenth of February-March, those being the days when the Jews of Persia rested from the slaughter, and celebrated their victory with feasting and gladness. The recent massacres of the Jews in Russia and Poland have lent especial solemnity to this observance.

The Sure Triumph of Righteousness. "Wicked men work hard to compass their own destruction. In the net which they spread is their own foot taken. The sword which they sharpen pierces them to the quick. In the book of Esther we have the whole progress of such retribution." — *Bishop Alfred Lee.*

"In order to be qualified to meet your duty you want unbounded faith in the triumph of the truth and the overthrow of wickedness. How dare the Christian church ever get discouraged? Have we not the Lord Almighty on our side? When Omniscience has lost its eyesight, and Omnipotence falls back impotent, and Jehovah is driven from his throne, then the church of Jesus Christ can afford to be despondent, but never until then." — *T. DeWitt Talmage.*

"This book of Esther teaches this above all things, that God is near to all that call upon him in truth, and that he is always working for the protection of those who really trust in him, and for the advancement of every right cause, and for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the confusion of every evil work." — *Rev. Alexander Raleigh, D.D.*

LESSON VIII (34). — August 20.

THE SECOND RETURN FROM EXILE. — Ezra 7 : 1—8 : 36.

PRINT Ezra 7 : 10; 8 : 21–23, 31, 32.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good.* — Ezra 8 : 22.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 107 : 1–9.
Reference Material : Ezra 9 : 1—10 : 17.
Primary Topic : Ezra's Prayer for Help.
Lesson Material : Ezra 7 : 10; 8 : 21–23, 31, 32.
Memory Verse : Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Josh. 1 : 9.
Junior Topic : Ezra's Prayer for Help on a Journey.
Lesson Material : Ezra 7 : 10; 8 : 21–23, 31, 32.
Memory Verse : If God is for us, who is against us? Rom. 8 : 31.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : Ezra : Teacher and Leader.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Religious Teachers : a Need and an Opportunity.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may copy a very simple outline map of the probable course of Ezra's journey. The teacher will place before them such a map which he has drawn, large enough to accommodate a number of questions on the lesson, each written on a slip of paper and tacked to the map at the place to which the question relates. The pupils will detach the questions in order and answer them.

The Older Classes will relate the lesson events, with such explanations as are necessary, but should devote considerable time to considering the need for religious teachers. Aim to implant in the minds of your pupils an earnest desire to devote their lives to Christ in full-time service as minister or missionary, or at any rate to teach in the Sunday school. Ezra will be an inspiring example.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Artaxerxes came to the throne (Beecher) B. C. 465. Ezra started from Babylon on the first day of B. C. 458, left Ahava on the twelfth day, and reached Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month. This was eighty years after the first return under Zerubbabel.

Place. — Babylon. Ahava, an unidentified river or canal in Babylonia. Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The right education of a Christian leader.
Christian ambition.
The reign of Artaxerxes.
Bible illustrations of trust in God.
The character of the Arabian desert.
Ezra as a model for Christian teachers and leaders.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Ezra : Teacher and Leader.

I. EZRA'S NOBLE PURPOSE, Ezra 7 : 1–28.
Ezra's ancestry and education.
Ezra's high ambition.
Ezra's great commission.
Ezra's prayer of gratitude.
Our ambitions and God's kingdom.

II. EZRA'S FAST AND PRAYER, Ezra 8 : 1–23.
Ezra's census.
The lack of Levites.
Humbled before God.
No need of soldiers.
Trusting God above all.

III. EZRA'S SAFE JOURNEY, Ezra 8 : 24–36.
Care for the treasure.
Protected from perils.
Sacrifices of praise.
Religious teachers : a need and an opportunity.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

"Ezra" in Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*. J. R. Miller's *Devotional Hours*. Maclaren's *Expositions*. Parker's *People's Bible*. Andrew Murray's *Humility*. Butler's *Bible Work*. Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church*. Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*. Watkinson's *Inspiration in Common Life*.

10. For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances.

1. **EZRA'S NOBLE PURPOSE,** Ezra 7 : 1–28. EZRA'S ANCESTRY. Ezra, who was to become a great leader of the Jews, was probably born in Babylon, in the reign of king Darius Hystaspes, and grew to manhood under Xerxes. His name means "help." He was a Levite, that is, a descendant of Levi, and he belonged to the priestly branch of the family, descended from Aaron. His great-great-grandfather had been high priest under King Zedekiah, was captured by Nebuchadnezzar at the final siege of Jerusalem, and put to death. Farther back, another ancestor was Hilkiah, the high priest who in the reign of Josiah discovered the Book of the Law in the temple. The exiles honored their religious leaders, and Ezra, belonging to a family especially distinguished, would be sure to be held in high esteem among them. Josephus, indeed, says that he was their high priest.

EZRA'S EDUCATION. The lad had access, very likely, to Babylonian schools in which were taught arithmetic, the crude astronomy of the day, their restricted geography, history, and grammar. As a Jew, he would be well grounded in a knowledge of the Hebrew law, the books of Moses. To study this he would need to know Hebrew, which had gone out of common use among the Jews, as well as the current language, Aramaic. He was also, as a Jewish boy, taught music, sacred poetry, the interpretation of the Law, and Hebrew history. It is generally held that Ezra wrote Chronicles, and the accomplishment of that great task shows how deeply he had delved into the history of his people. He was not technically a prophet, but he had the prophetic spirit and devotion. He probably began his studies at the age of thirteen. He was destined to be a scribe, and it was the rule to enter upon that office at the age of thirty. He would therefore spend seventeen years in these studies, and his history shows that they were years well spent. He was a true student of the Word of God, and so studied that he could put the Word into practice in his after life.

EZRA'S HIGH AMBITION. 10. **For Ezra had set his heart.** The preceding verse sets forth God's favor shown to Ezra. This verse begins with "for" because it shows the reason for God's favor. Ezra was a man whom God could honor, be-

cause he honored God. In the first place, he was a man of purpose. He was like Daniel, of whom it is written that he "purposed in his heart" to be true to God (Dan. 1 : 8). Without purpose there is no progress, in religion or anything else. **To seek the law of Jehovah.** He planned to gain a complete understanding of God's law as set forth in the sacred writings. He intended to become a teacher, and knowledge comes before teaching. That is the meaning of the teacher-training movement in the modern Sunday school. **And to do it.** "No impression without expression" is a maxim of true pedagogy, and it is finely illustrated by the education of Ezra. We do not really know a religious principle until we carry it out in our lives. Horace Mann would not graduate a student from Antioch College, however fine his intellect, unless a fine character went with it; for he held that an educated rascal was a double menace to society. **And to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances.** These terms correspond to our statutory law and common law (see Kyle's *Problem of the Pentateuch*). Ezra became "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (verse 6). "The name 'scribe' denoted under the monarchy an official of the court, a state secretary. After the fall of the monarchy it had the meaning of a student of Scripture, copying, compiling, and commenting upon it."— *Hastings*. He had a deep love for God's Word, and a deep longing to implant it in the lives of others. He was a forerunner of our modern pastors and Sunday-school teachers.

Ezra's Great Commission. The ruler of the Persian empire, as Ezra grew to manhood, was Artaxerxes Longimanus ("Long-hand"), the son of Xerxes. This monarch had inaugurated his reign by the murder of his older brother and the execution of his father's murderer who had placed Artaxerxes himself on the throne. He was soon disturbed by a revolt of Egypt, aided by Athens. It may have been the outbreak of this formidable rebellion that persuaded Artaxerxes of the wisdom of allowing more of the Jews to return to Jerusalem, in order that Judah might form a strong frontier fortress on the southwest, a barrier against the approach of Egypt.

Who should lead such a movement of the Jews? It was the custom of the Persian kings to spend part of the year in each of their three capitals, Susa, Ecbatana, and Babylon, but by far the longest time in Babylon. While there Artaxerxes had evidently come to know Ezra and had formed a high opinion of his ability, character, and influence. Naturally it was Ezra whom he appointed head of the Jews who would return, and indeed verse 6 seems to imply that the original suggestion of the plan came to the king from Ezra himself in the form of an eager petition.

The commission which the "kings of kings" (a common title of the Persian monarchs) gave to Ezra conferred complete authority upon him. Adding the assent of "his seven counsellors," Artaxerxes bade Ezra carry to Jerusalem a gift which the king and his council would make, a gift of the king's subjects in Babylon, and the freewill-offerings of the Jewish priests and people. With these gifts he was to offer sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem, and use what was left as he saw fit. Vessels for use in the temple services would be added to the gift, and whatever else might be needed. Ezra was given the right to draw on the king's treasuries west of the Euphrates to the extent of $187,500, together with large quantities of wheat, wine, oil, and salt for the sacrifices. As a further benefaction the king relieved from taxation the Levites and other officers and ministers of the temple. Moreover, he empowered Ezra to appoint magistrates and judges in the provinces west of the Euphrates, and decreed the most severe penalties for all that disobeyed the king's letter. It was a thorough-going commission.

Ezra's Prayer of Gratitude. No wonder, with such a fulfilment of his highest ambition, that Ezra's heart was filled with thanksgiving. In the manner of Nehemiah, Ezra broke out into praise of his God. "This ejaculatory thanksgiving (verses 27, 28) is incorporated with his record in so artless a manner as to confirm the impression that the whole narrative is from his hand."— *Ellicott*. Ezra attributes the entire event to Jehovah. It was God who planted the thought in the king's heart and who gave Ezra this great opportunity. The knowledge of this providential leading was a powerful strengthening influence in Ezra's life; and it may be an equal strength for us, since the Jewish leader was no more favored by Providence than we may be.

Our Ambitions and God's Kingdom. "To become like Christ is the only thing in the world worth caring for, the thing before which every ambition of man is folly and all lower achievement vain."— *Henry Drummond*. Drummond's life illustrates this thought. A college professor, he became an evangelist to college men all over the world. He might have become a great scientist; he chose to become a

21. Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ă-hā'-vâ, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

---

great Christian leader. God has a work for each of us to do. We can have no nobler, no loftier ambition than just to do it, as Ezra did his work.

"What others think of thee stay not to ask;
Rather than please the many, serve the few;
Knowing that life's most glorious regal task
Is never quite too hard for thee to do." — *Arthur L. Salmon.*

II. **EZRA'S FAST AND PRAYER,** Ezra 8 : 1–23. EZRA'S CENSUS. The list which Ezra next gives of the Jewish families that returned with him, and the names of their heads, seems dull at the first sight, but it is of interest to the scholar, as it must have been to the Jews of the generations nearest to Ezra's time. During the three hundredth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth I printed in my paper a series of articles on the leaders of the company that came over in the Mayflower, and received many letters from many parts of the country asking for a complete list of the Mayflower company, and of the families descended from them, that the inquirers might know whether they were related to them. This is just such an honorable list.

It begins, as is fitting, with the priestly families, descended from Aaron. The first was Ezra's own family, that of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, who succeeded Aaron as the second high priest. The head of this family was not Ezra but Gershom. Then came the family of Ithamar, Aaron's youngest son, headed at this time by a man named Daniel.

The royal family comes next, "the sons of David," headed by Hattush. This Hattush may have been the great-great-grandson of Zerubbabel, who led the first return.

Next in order comes the common people, twelve families in all, perhaps as symbolizing the tribes, once more united. These twelve are given with their heads. The total number of the exiles who went back with Ezra is said to have been 1,496 adult males, as against 42,360 men and women who returned under Zerubbabel. The number of women and servants is not here given.

THE LACK OF LEVITES. Ezra brought his company together at the river Ahava, seemingly so called because it passed a town called Ahava. The river may have been one of the many canals of Babylonia, and cannot now be identified, though Rawlinson thought it was the "Is" of Herodotus, now called "Hit," which flowed past a town of the same name eight days from Babylon.

The company encamped three days at Ahava, and there the startling discovery was made that there were no Levites among them. Under Zerubbabel also the number of Levites returning was much smaller than the number of priests. The probable reason in each case is that in Babylonia the Levites tended to become equal in honor and authority to the priests, and so were reluctant to return to Jerusalem where they would be reduced to their ancient subordinate position in the second rank. "Nothing is more difficult than self-effacement even in the service of God."— *Prof. Walter F. Adeney.*

As Levites were the aids of the priests in conducting the temple services, and as a revival of religion was Ezra's main purpose, this omission needed to be remedied at once. Not far away, at a place called Casiphia, was a Levite colony headed by Iddo. Sending to Iddo an influential committee, Ezra obtained from him thirty-eight Levites and two hundred and twenty Nethinim, the latter being temple servants whose duties were more menial than those of the Levites. Rawlinson, allowing four to a family, reckons the entire company at six thousand before this addition was made, and considers that the addition of the Levites and Nethinim with their families brought the number up to about seven thousand.

HUMBLED BEFORE GOD. 21. **Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the River Ahava.** "Like the Israelites after the defeat at Gibeah in their retributive war with Benjamin (Judg. 20 : 26); like the penitent people at Mizpah, in the days of Samuel, when they put away their idols (1 Sam. 7 : 6); like Jehoshaphat and his subjects when rumors of a threatened invasion filled them with apprehension (2 Chron. 20 : 3), Ezra and his followers fasted and humbled themselves before God in view of their hazardous undertaking."— *Expositor's Bible.* It was the wisest preparation for

22. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good ; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

---

their journey they could have made, and is an example for us to follow when we embark on any new project. **That we might humble ourselves before our God.** Humility is the only foundation for prevailing prayer. "Absolute, unceasing, universal humility must be the root-disposition of every prayer and every approach to God as well as of every dealing with man ; and we might as well attempt to see without eyes, or live without breath, as believe or draw nigh to God, or dwell in his love without an all-prevading humility and lowliness of heart."— *Andrew Murray.* **To seek of him a straight way for us.** "Both a direct road, that they might not have to turn aside on account of attacks and dangers from robbers or enemies, and a level road without obstacles and inequalities."—*Cambridge Bible.* "We should begin every new journey, every new undertaking, every new piece of work, by asking God to show us the way. The Bible very significantly begins with the words, 'In the beginning, God.' At the beginning of everything God should be recognized and honored. No friendship ever reaches its best unless God be in it and God's blessing on it. No business ever can have the fullest success unless the hand of God be in it and God's guidance be sought. The things we cannot ask God's blessing upon we would better not do. The place into which we cannot ask God to guide us we never should enter."— *J. R. Miller.* **And for our little ones.** This beautiful touch shows that the Jewish pilgrims, like the Pilgrim Fathers, went forth with their wives and children. It was for these, more than for themselves, that they dreaded the perils and hardships of the long journey. **And for all our substances.** Not only the rich gifts that they were carrying to the temple, but their provisions for the journey, and all their wealth. The Jews from Judah had been in exile a century and a half, those from the Northern Kingsom two centuries and a half. Frugal, industrious, adaptable, with keen commercial instinct, good farmers, good executives, as Jews always are and always have been, the exiles prospered in Babylonia, and had much substance to carry back with them.

NO NEED OF SOLDIERS. 22. **For I was ashamed to ask of the king.** The implication is that Ezra would have liked to make the request, if he had not spoken as he had to Artaxerxes before he realized the dangers of the route. **A band of soldiers and horsemen.** Armed men on foot and on horseback. Nehemiah (Neh. 2 : 9) at a later date accepted such an escort gladly. **To help us against the enemy in the way.** Probably Arab tribes, the lawless Bedouin robbers that ranged the desert, are thought of. They would certainly know of so rich a caravan, and in its helpless condition would be quite sure to attack it. **Because we had spoken unto the king.** Very likely Ezra had had several interviews with Artaxerxes, laying plans for the journey. **Saying, The hand of our God is upon them that seek him, for good.** Not "seek him for good," but God's hand is on them for their good. "The symbolic phrase, 'the hand of our God,' as expressive of the Divine protection, occurs with remarkable frequency in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and though not peculiar to

A Caravan.

23. So we fasted and besought our God for this : and he was entreated of us.

---

them, is yet exceedingly characteristic of them. It has a certain beauty and force of its own. The hand is of course the seat of active power. It is on or over a man like some great shield held aloft above him, below which there is safe hiding. So that great hand bends itself over us, and we are secure beneath its hollow. That was Ezra's faith, and that should be ours ."— *Alexander Maclaren.* **But his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.** Not only would God be for Ezra and his company, but he would be angry with those that might be hostile to them, and would turn against them his omnipotence. God's children have thus a double safety, a wall of defence and an aggressive army.

23. **So we fasted and besought our God for this.** It was not a vague, general prayer, but a very specific one that Ezra and his followers raised to heaven. Our prayers are fruitful quite in proportion as they are definite. **And he was entreated of us.** God always answers prayer, if not in our way always, yet always in his way, which is infinitely better. It might have been best for Ezra's prayer to be answered by an attack from the Arabs and the loss of all the Jews' possessions ; if so, then that attack would have been God's answer to Ezra's prayer, and the best answer possible.

Illustration. " The pull of our prayer may not move the everlasting throne, but, like the pull on a line from the bow of a boat, it may draw us into closer fellowship with God and fuller harmony with his wise and holy will."— *Theodore L. Cuyler.*

TRUSTING GOD ABOVE ALL. " A life of faith is a life of dependence upon God. Part of our witnessing for God before the world is showing that our trust is not in human strength, but in God himself. We say, ' The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want.' Do we prove our faith in this confession ? Many of us are too easily frightened in time of danger or trouble. With such a God as ours we ought to be ashamed to be afraid of anything. We ought not to turn to the world's help after we have declared so strongly that God is our defence and our refuge. We should show by the way we meet difficulties, dangers, losses, sorrows, that there is a divine reality on which we are leaning."— *J. R. Miller.*

" The arm of flesh may be the arm of God. God-fearing people may without inconsistency claim the protection of the magistrate and the benefit of the law. A Christian nation may need the ' band of soldiers.' The saint without anomaly may avail himself of the physician's aid. But it is our solemn duty and privilege on rare occasions to trust in God without any of these adventitious aids which ordinarily are obligatory."— *Rev. W. L. Watkinson, D.D.*

God has filled this world with things and laws and persons that can be trusted and he wants us to rely on them. In relying on them we are relying on him, since he gave them. But if they fail, we still have our main reliance. When father and mother forsake us, the Lord will take us up.

III. **EZRA'S SAFE JOURNEY,** Ezra 8 : 24–36. CARE FOR THE TREASURE. Like every one who is worthy to be a public servant, Ezra was scrupulous in the matter of trusts. He believed in exact accounts and in the most careful auditing. As soon as he had his Levites, he took twelve of the priests and Levites (compare verse 24 with Neh. 12 : 24) and carefully counted out and weighed out into their hands all the treasure he was taking to the temple in Jerusalem, that they and not he might be responsible for it. It was an enormous treasure, silver worth about $1,250,000, silver vessels worth $185,000, gold worth $3,375,000, gold basins worth $5,000, and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. Altogether, the treasure was worth nearly $5,000,000.

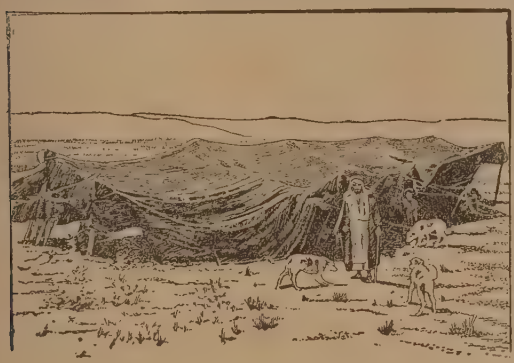
Ezra gave his treasurers a solemn charge. They were consecrated, and they held consecrated wealth in their keeping. Let them guard it with jealous care, and preserve it for the final accounting when they should reach Jerusalem. It is all an ennobling example for every Christian. Each of us, however insignificant, has some of God's money in his hands, and some of God's other possessions, such as time, strength, and ability. We are all God's stewards. We are all to give an accounting some day. **Let Ezra's exhortation ring ever in our ears,**

> ' A charge to keep I have,
> A God to glorify."

31. Then we departed from the river Ă-hā'-vȧ on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem : and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the lier-in-wait by the way.

32. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

Protected from Perils. 31. **Then we departed from the river Ahava.** We are reminded of Abraham's leap of faith acrosss that same desert to that same land. With what fears and yet with what courage these pilgrims set forth from Ahava ! **On the twelfth day of the first month.** March-April. "It was in the flowery spring when they crossed the desert, and they reached Jerusalem in the midsummer heats." — *Dean Stanley.* **To go unto Jerusalem.** It was eight hundred miles by the shortest way, straight across the desert ; probably much longer by the way they took. **And the hand of our God was upon us.** This thought runs like a gracious chorus through Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. It may be taken as the life-motto of Ezra. **And he delivered us from the hand of the enemy.** What is "the hand of the enemy," of any enemy, when it meets the all-powerful hand of Jehovah ? We may imagine that Ezra saw lurking bands of robbers on the way, Bedouin riders watching them from the distance ; but they did not come near the caravan. **And the lier-in-wait by the way.** "The ventures of faith are ever rewarded. We cannot set our expectations too high. When we come to tell the completed story of our lives we shall have to record the fulfilment of all God's promises and the accomplishment of all our prayers that were built on these. And as we look from the watch-towers of the city on the desert that stretches to its very walls, and remember all the way by which he led us, we shall rejoice over his vindication of our poor faith."— *Alexander Maclaren.*



From a photograph by Forder.
Bedouin Tents.

32. **And we came to Jerusalem.** "Four months and a half were spent in the long march up the Euphrates, across the desert to northern Syria, and then south. to Jerusalem."— *Geikie.* **And abode there three days,** before taking up the task for which Ezra came. So also Nehemiah (Neh. 2 : 11). After the weary journey a much longer rest than this would have been amply excusable, but Ezra must get right to work.

Sacrifices of Praise. Ezra's first care was to see that the treasure brought for the temple was properly delivered and all accounted for. Two priests and two Levites were appointed to receive the gifts, and the entire transaction was put into writing, the papers being kept among the state documents. Ezra would have everything shipshape. An investigating committee might go into his record at any time.

The next care of Ezra, the journey being thus completed, was to thank God for his protection and care, and consecrate himself and his followers for their new life in Jerusalem. That was the object of the extensive sacrifices which were offered in the temple, for each tribe one bullock, one he-goat and eight rams, together with seventy-seven lambs (a magnification of the perfect number seven) for all Israel. This was a great Thanksgiving Day in Jerusalem.

Religious Teachers : a Need and an Opportunity. Every denomination in urgent need of able young men to fill its vacant pulpits. Every Sunday school sadly needs a larger number of well-equipped and deeply consecrated teachers. Every

prayer meeting needs more Christians who will lead their fellow Christians in prayer and encourage them with testimony. Every mission field, at home and abroad, needs more workers — missionaries, evangelists, colporters, medical missionaries, helpers of every kind. The world — the vast, needy world — is open to the Ezras. No ability but may be used for the Master. The rewards are glorious : one's own satisfaction and joy, the gratitude of many other souls, the glad praise of Jesus Christ. Ezra was simply a man who saw the need for religious leadership, and trusted God enough to throw himself into the task. Why should not every one of your class be an Ezra ?

LESSON IX (35).— August 27.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER. — Nehemiah 1 : 1–11.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.* — JAS. 5 : 16.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 42 : 1–8.
Reference Material : Ex. 32 : 20–32 ; 1 Sam. 7 : 5–11 ; 1 Kings 8 : 22–55 ; Jer. 14 : 19–22. Matt. 9 : 37, 38 ; Luke 6 : 12–16 ; Acts 1 : 12–14 ; Eph. 3 : 14–21.
Primary Topic : NEHEMIAH TALKING TO GOD.
Memory Verse : Lord, teach us to pray. Luke 11 : 1.
Junior Topic : THE PRAYER OF THE KING'S CUPBEARER.
Memory Verses : Matt. 7 : 7, 8.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : PRAYER AS A PREPARATION FOR ALL UNDERTAKINGS.
Topic for Young People and Adults : PRAYER AND POWER.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes. — A series of questions on the lesson, written on slips of paper, may be drawn from a cup looking as much as possible like an ancient Persian drinking cup. Interest the boys and girls in an outline of a model prayer, using Nehemiah's prayer as a basis, and show them how they can make their own prayers fuller and more helpful.

The Older Classes. — The entire theory and practice of prayer is involved in this lesson. After the historical background has been given fully, let members of the class among whom the various elements of prayer have been divided, speak of them in turn, with illustrations from Nehemiah's prayer and other prayers of the Bible.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Nehemiah heard his bad news from Jerusalem (Beecher) in December of B. C. 445, and received permission to go thither in March, B. C. 444.

Place. — The royal palace in Shushan (Susa), the winter capital of Persia.

THE ROUND TABLE.
FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The book of Nehemiah.
The position of cupbearer.
Nehemiah's character.
The elements of prayer.
Bible examples of absolute monarchs.
The Bible teachings on answers to prayer.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Prayer as a Preparation for All Undertakings.

I. NEHEMIAH'S GRIEF, vs. 1–4.
The previous life of Nehemiah.
Hanani's report.
Tears for Jerusalem.
Love for church and country.

II. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER, vs. 5–11a.
Realizing God.
Confessing to God.
Pleading the promises.
Urging desires.
" Instant in prayer."

III. NEHEMIAH'S SUCCESS, Neh. 1 : 11b ; 2 : 1–11.
The sad cupbearer.
The prayerful petition.
The petition granted.
The journey to Jerusalem.
Prayer and power.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Nehemiah by Bishop Ryle (*Cambridge Bible*), Prof. T. Wilton Davies (*New Century Bible*), Prof. L. W. Batten (*International Critical Commentary*), Rawlinson (*Pulpit Commentary*), Cook (*Speaker's Commentary*), Adeney (*Expositor's Bible*), Maclaren (*Expositions*), etc. Stowell's *Nehemiah, A Model for Men of Business.* Chapters on Nehemiah in Whyte's *Bible Characters*, Geikie's *Landmarks of Old Testament History* and *Old Testament Characters*, Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, Wharton's *Famous Men of the Old Testament*, Milligan's " Nehemiah " in *Men of the Old Testament.* Charles Reade's *Bible Characters.* Rawlinson's *Ezra and Nehemiah.* Robinson's *Leaders of Israel.* Eiselen's *The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings.* Works on prayer by Hastings, Phelps, Murray, Gordon, Carpenter, Gore, Aitken, Horton, Morgan, McFadyen, etc. Poem on Nehemiah by E. Horton.

1. The words of Nehemiah the son of Hăc-ă-lī'-ăh.

Now it came to pass in the month Chĭs'-lĕv, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shu'-shăn the palace,

I. **NEHEMIAH'S GRIEF**, vs. 1–4. The Previous Life of Nehemiah. 1. **The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.** "Nehemiah plunges suddenly into his story, without giving us any hints of his previous history." — *Hastings.* We know only his father's name and the fact that he had more than one brother. The brother whose name we know, Hanani, was "a man of sufficient character and importance to have been made a ruler of Jerusalem. From the fact that Nehemiah was so grieved at the desolation of the city and sepulchres of his fathers and that he was so jealous for the laws of the God of Judah, we can justly infer that he was brought up by pious parents, who instructed him in the history and law of the Jewish people. Doubtless because of his probity and ability, he was apparently at an early age appointed by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, to the responsible position of cupbearer to the king." — *Prof. R. D. Wilson.* On insufficient grounds he has been thought to have been a priest and a member of the Jewish royal family, or at least of noble lineage. His name signifies "comforted of Jehovah."

Persian King and Cupbearer.

"I regard Nehemiah as one of the greatest of Old Testament characters. Considered in the light of achievement but few equalled him. As Michelangelo was immortalized by his work on St. Peter's; as Sir Christopher Wren's fame rests with St. Paul's in London; as Solomon is more distinguished for the temple he erected than anything else, so the name of Nehemiah is indissolubly associated with the walls of Jerusalem." — *Rev. M. B. Wharton, D.D.*

The Book of Nehemiah is essentially one book with Ezra. The two consist of many documents put together seemingly by the editor of the books of Chronicles, probably Ezra. The parts of the book of Nehemiah in the first person are by Nehemiah himself, and some think he wrote the entire book, as the title of the book would indicate. The book of Nehemiah is a contemporary document of the highest value, written with great vigor, and presenting with vividness a remarkably noble and winsome character.

Hanani's Report. **Now it came to pass in the month Chislev.** "Now" indicates that we have here only an extract from a longer work, the full memoirs of Nehemiah. Chislev was a winter month, the ninth of the Jewish year, corresponding roughly to our December. **In the twentieth year** of the reign of King Artaxerxes. Since the events of the following chapter are placed in the first month, but still in the twentieth year, some scholars think that Nehemiah was using the sacred year which began with the seventh month, others that the years of the reign of Artaxerxes were reckoned from the month in which he ascended the throne, and others that this was originally written "nineteenth" but was changed by a scribe's error to "twentieth." **As I was in Shushan the palace.** Shushan (Susa) was the winter capital of the kings of Persia. Its river, the Choaspes, supplied the Persian kings with the only drinking water they would use. On the site of a splendid palace in Shushan built by Darius but destroyed by fire, Artaxerxes had erected a still more magnificent palace. "The palace" here, however, signifies a fortified place, and designates Shushan as being a stronghold as well as a capital of the empire.

2. That Hă-nā'-nī, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men out of Judah ; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, that were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

3. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach : the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days ; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven,

---

2. **That Hanani, one of my brethren, came.** Hanani means "gracious." He is referred to again in Neh. 7 : 2, where it is clear that a literal brother is meant, and not merely one of Nehemiah's fellow countrymen. **He and certain men out of Judah.** The implication is that Hanani as well as these "certain men" had just come from Jerusalem. **And I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped.** Escaped from bondage in Babylonia and returned to Jerusalem under Ezra. **That were left of the captivity.** Those that had survived the captivity. **And concerning Jerusalem.** Nehemiah does not ask about the temple; perhaps he was sure that Ezra's expedition had cared for that.

3. **And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity.** The Jews that had returned were comparatively few, and could most fittingly be described as a "remnant." "'Remnant' has a special significance in the prophecies of Isaiah as denoting 'a holy seed' or spiritual kernel of the nation which should survive impending judgment and become the germ of the people of God, being blessed of God and made a blessing." — *Rev. W. L. Walker.* **There in the province.** The province of the Persian empire of which Jerusalem was the center and which included Judah. **Are in great affliction and reproach.** They suffered many hardships in the city itself, as well as the scorn of their foes outside the city. **The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down.** In order to perpetuate their conquest and prevent the military recovery of Jerusalem, the Assyrians had made great breaches in the walls of Jerusalem at vital points, and these breaches had never been closed up. The city therefore was open to the attack of any enemy, however insignificant. **And the gates thereof are burned with fire.** Of course Nehemiah knew about the destruction of the wall and gates which occurred one hundred and fifty years previously, but he probably expected that Ezra's expedition would be able to restore the defences of the city.

4. **And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept.** "In those days, rather one may say in those countries of disorder, a city without locked gates and lofty walls was no city at all." — *Dean Stanley.* "A few years previously Egypt had been in revolt ; she might revolt again and carry her arms into Syria. Arab tribes from the desert might extend their raids into Judæa, and be tempted by the known value of the temple treasures to swoop upon the unwalled town. Such thoughts occurring to an excitable Oriental produced not grief and anxiety merely, but a flood of tears." — *Rawlinson.* **And mourned certain days.** "'Mourned for days'—denoting an indefinite period." — *International Critical Commentary.* **And I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.** "God of heaven" is an expression that never became common among the Jews, and seems to have been borrowed from the religious terms of the Babylonians. It is not very different in meaning from "Most High God," and expresses the transcendent majesty of Jehovah. Fasting became a common practice among the exiles, who established fasts on the anniversaries of the capture of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple, and the murder of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed governor of Judah. Fasting is also recorded of Daniel, Esther, and Ezra. The value of fasting is that it clears the brain, gives time for religious meditation and prayer, and strengthens the purpose of the devotee. Thus fasting is often a powerful aid to prayer.

LOVE OF CHURCH AND COUNTRY. "There is something inspiriting and noble in the spectacle. Nehemiah might have remained in selfish ease and affluence at the Persian court, but he gave up his position there at the higher call of patriotism and duty." — *Rev. George Milligan, D.D.*

"Where Josephus got it he does not tell us, but he gives us a most picturesque and pathetic account of how Nehemiah was taking the air one evening outside the walls when some travel-stained men passed him on their way into the gate of the city. As

5. And said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments :

6. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. Yea, I and my father's house have sinned :

---

they passed him he overheard them conversing together in the Hebrew tongue. And Nehemiah forgot all about Artaxerxes's supper as he talked with the travellers . . . Young John Milton, you will remember, could not enjoy the skies, or the art, or the letters of Italy, while England at home was as she was." — *Alexander Whyte.*

"Light heart, but true !
True to thy God 'mid Shushan's golden dream,
True to those hearts that wept by Babel's stream,
Thou'rt still a Jew." — *E. Horton.*

II. **NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER,** vs. 5–11. This prayer is a model one. It contains the elements of true prayer. It " is singularly penetrating, revealing a keen insight into the secret of the calamities of Israel, and an exact perception of the relation of God to those calamities." — *Prof. Walter F. Adeney.* The prayer consists of : (A) the invocation, bringing to mind a vivid image of the Infinite Being who is addressed; (B) confession ; (C) pleading God's promises ; (D) urging petitions. The purpose of the entire prayer was intercession. This is the framework of all genuine prayer.

A. Realizing God. 5. **And said, I beseech thee.** In many respects Nehemiah's prayer is the same as that glorious prayer of Daniel in Dan. 9 : 4–19, and the opening verses of the two are alike almost word for word. Nehemiah probably knew Daniel's prayer and had committed it to memory , or perhaps both Daniel and Nehemiah used a common prayer formula of the Jewish church. **O Jehovah.** Daniel uses the term " Lord " (Adonai), the word which the Jews used in order to avoid pronouncing the dread name, " Jehovah." It will add to the richness and the meaning of our prayers if at different times we address the Deity by different sacred names, including the three persons who make up the divine Trinity. **The God of heaven.** See the explanation of this term in the preceding verse. **The great and terrible God.** Nehemiah was evidently in the habit of dwelling on the majesty and might of Jehovah ; see Neh. 4 : 14 ; compare Neh. 9 : 32. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and leads straight on to the love of the Lord and to confident trust in his goodness. **That keepeth covenant and lovingkindness.** This expression is often used in Old Testament prayers ; see Deut. 7 : 9 ; 1 Kings 8 : 23 ; Neh. 9 : 32 ; Dan. 9 : 4. God's covenant of lovingkindness is the compact he has made with all his children, that if they will do his will, he will preserve them from all harm and bring them into all blessedness. The " Old Testament " and the " New Testament " mean the old and new covenants. The entire Bible is a commentary on the word " covenant." **With them that love him.** It is very striking that the warm, familiar thought of love to God is expressed side by side with the thought that God is " great and terrible." **And keep his commandments.** God " keeps " his covenant of lovingkindness, but only with those that " keep " his commandments. God's great fidelity is to be matched by our little fidelity.

6. **Let thine ear now be attentive.** " The ' now ' of this verse is that of entreaty, not the ' now ' of time." — *New Century Bible.* This is quite the opposite of the frantic cries of the heathen priests of Mount Carmel, " O Baal, hear us," which Elijah ridiculed: " Cry aloud ; for he is a god : either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked " (1 Kings 18 : 27). It is like the cry of a child to a father, sure that the father will be glad to listen. **And thine eyes open.** Thus also Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, 1 Kings 8 : 52 ; 2 Chron. 6 : 40. God's eyes and ears are always open to his children, and in prayer we remind ourselves of that blessed truth. **That thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant** " Thy servant " is of course Nehemiah himself. He is the king's cupbearer, but he feels himself unworthy to approach the throne of the Most High. The spirit of prayer must always be the spirit of humility. **Which I pray before thee at this time, day and night.** Nehemiah refers to the

7. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

8. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples:

9. But if ye return unto me, and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen, to cause my name to dwell there.

"certain days" of verse 4. Sincere prayer is not limited in time; it is a matter of longing desire, not of hours and days; it continues as long as the desire continues and is not satisfied. **For the children of Israel thy servants.** The Jews were God's servants, as Nehemiah himself was a servant of the Most High. No people came so close to God. They were unworthy servants, but still after their poor fashion they served God better than any other nation that had existed in the world. Here enters another element of true prayer,— intercession. Prayer that is selfish, that is only for the benefit of the one praying, is only the beginning of prayer. If it stops there, it soon ceases to be prayer at all, for the self-giving God cannot be reached by any self-seeker. The most searching question to ask of your prayers is this: Do they seek with eager earnestness the welfare and happiness of others?

B. CONFESSING TO GOD. **While I confess the sins of the children of Israel.** Confession is another element of true prayer. It should be our custom, early in our prayers, to review the past day and confess the sins of which we have been guilty. Thus we shall see ourselves as we are, come to understand our great need of God, and approach him humbly as we should. **Which we have sinned against thee.** Thus Ezra also (Ezra 10 : 1) identified himself with the sins of his people, and confessed them with bitter tears though he had not himself been guilty of them, except as belonging to the same nation with the sinners. **Yea, I and my father's house have sinned.** "If Nehemiah belonged to the house of David, there would be a special appropriateness in these words. According to one tradition, he was of the tribe of Judah." — *Cambridge Bible.*

7. **We have dealt very corruptly against thee.** "Did Nehemiah say, 'We have not deserved our punishment; help us in this hour of undeserved calamity'? That is not the prayer that throws back the doors of the kingdom of heaven. Nehemiah's was a model confession. He made a clean breast of it. Do you the same, about your theft, and your lying, and your untruthfulness in every way, and your dishonorableness. Whilst we confess he remits. If you are keeping back any part of the price, he will keep back the whole of the blessing." — *Joseph Parker.* **And have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances.** Professor Kyle shows that throughout the Old Testament, in such phrases as this, "commandments" refer to the direct commands of Jehovah, especially the Decalogue; "statutes" to the statutory laws and "ordinances" to the common law. The phrase sums up all God's requirements, direct and indirect, explicit and implicit. Israel had broken every one of them. **Which thou commandedst thy servant Moses,** that he might write them down and pass them on to the people. The great lawgiver is often called God's servant, in both the Old and the New Testaments, and there is no nobler title that man can wear.

C. PLEADING THE PROMISES. 8. **Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses.** In what follows Nehemiah is giving the sense of several Old Testament passages rather than quoting any passage exactly — a rather common practice of sacred writers. See Lev. 26 : 27–45; Deut. 30 : 1–5. We enter here upon another division of this model prayer. No prayer can go far without resting on God's promises. They are the life of prayer, its swiftness and its strength. Those that know best how to pray know their Bibles best. **Saying, If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples.** "Trespass" means here to disobey one of God's commands. As long as the Jews acted as God's nation, they retained their national life. When they turned to the gods of other peoples, they were scattered among those peoples.

9. **But if ye return unto me.** All God's promises are conditioned, and this is the necessary basis of the great promise Nehemiah is about to quote. God could not

10. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name ; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

---

bless his people while they were turning their backs on him ; he could not force his love upon unwilling hearts. This is the one thing that even God cannot do. **And keep my commandments and do them.** They are not merely to turn, to repent, but they are to do works worthy of repentance (Acts 26 : 20). All other repentance is a farce. **Though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heavens.** Nehemiah plainly has in mind Deut. 30 : 4 ; also in Isa. 56 : 8 Jehovah is beautifully described as the one " who gathereth the outcasts of Israel." **Yet I will gather them from thence.** We are reminded of Christ's cry over Jerusalem, " How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not ! " (Luke 13 : 34.) **And will bring them into the place that I have chosen.** This phrase is doubtless taken from Deuteronomy, with whose words Nehemiah appears saturated ; it is found there about twenty times. The chosen place is of course Jerusalem, in whose temple God had for so many centuries dwelt visibly. **To cause my name to dwell there.** Chronicles often associates God's name with the temple. God's " name " throughout the Bible signifies God himself, " not a mere *word*, but the whole of the divine manifestation, the character of God as revealed in his relations to his people and in his dealings with them." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. " Hallowed be thy name." " Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name."

D. Urging Desires. 10. **Now these are thy servants and thy people.** It is not until all these other elements of prayer have been used — adoration, confession, pleading the promises, and intercession — that Nehemiah comes to the element of petition, which is the whole contents of prayers conceived on a lower plane. Even now, Nehemiah does not plunge at his request, but sets forth the ground on which he will rest his petition : it is not on behalf of aliens, but of God's own servants, his own people, brought in penitence to the feet of their own Lord. **Whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.** Nehemiah may have been thinking of these words as they appear in Ex. 32 : 11, the plea of Moses when the Israelites had made the golden calf. God had redeemed his people from Egyptian bondage, and brought them out by his power as shown in the ten plagues and the driving back of the Red Sea. All through the Bible pious Jews rest their confidence on this signal proof of God's favor.

11. **O Lord, I beseech thee.** Nehemiah repeats, as a heart-felt refrain, the opening words of his prayer. **Let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant.** Again, of Nehemiah himself. **And to the prayer of thy servants.** Some think that others were praying with Nehemiah ; but he had identified himself with his people, and by tender intercession had brought them with him into his prayer. No one who prays for others feels that he is praying alone. **Who delight to fear thy name.** This union of fear and joy is a paradox, but every true worshiper will recall many experiences of it. All that " serve the Lord with fear," " rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2 : 11) ; all that " fear the Lord, praise him " (Ps. 22 : 23). **And prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day.** This may mean only " at this time," " in this emergency," and not that Nehemiah intended to present his request to the king on that very day. **And grant him mercy in the sight of this man.** Artaxerxes is not named in the prayer, but Nehemiah's thoughts are full of him, and he realizes the absolute power of the monarch in the matter which he has so much at heart. It is by such side hints that we gain some idea of the dread inspired by a tyrant — for Nehemiah was a man of great courage and boldness.

" Instant in Prayer." " Where ought we not to pray ? When ought we not to pray ? The ear of God is never shut — the mercy-seat is never remote. It is as near in the warehouse as in the chamber, as accessible in the market-place as in the sanctuary. The arrow from the bow of faith pierces heaven in the twinkling of an eye, nor through the Mediator does the faintest ejaculation fail of a reply. The

prayer of faith never fell to the ground. Ought we not then to 'pray without ceasing'? Ought we not to 'continue instant in prayer'?" — *Canon Stowell.*

"Nehemiah (see chap. 2) set us all an example. He did not answer the king out of his own head, and pray for wisdom six hours afterwards, because it was bedtime. He prayed standing on the spot, and, like a skilful gunner, shot the occasion flying. He was strengthened by ejaculatory prayer, the soul's best weapon." — *Charles Reade.*

III. **NEHEMIAH'S SUCCESS,** Neh. 1 : 11b; 2 : 1–11. THE SAD CUPBEARER. 11(b). **Now I was cupbearer to the king.** This fact is here stated to show who is meant by "this man" of the prayer, and the means by which Nehemiah had access to the king. A king's cupbearer (there were a number of them, with a chief; it is not known whether Nehemiah was the chief cupbearer or not) was an important court official. Compare the chief butler in the story of Joseph. The Persian king seldom dined with his guests. Usually he dined alone, though sometimes the queen was with him and one or two of his children. It was the cupbearer's duty to pour out the king's wine, and taste it to make sure that it had not been poisoned, since Oriental tyrants were in constant dread of assassination, and with good reason.

Nehemiah before the King.

It was forbidden for any of the king's servants to appear sad or downcast, for that was an evil omen and would bring bad fortune, and besides it hinted at discontent and plotting. Nehemiah, though he bore a heavy burden on his heart, was able to disguise his grief for many days. All the time he was looking in vain for a good chance to present his request, for the king must be in the best of humor. Some think that Nehemiah was not often called to attend the king, but had to await his turn. At any rate, it was not till the month Nisan (March-April), three months after Hanani had brought the bad news from Jerusalem, that, either by accident or intention, Nehemiah's sadness became apparent to the king, and he asked the reason.

THE PRAYERFUL PETITION. Nehemiah, the man of prayer, breathed a prayer within himself before answering the king. Then he begged Artaxerxes to send him to Judah, the land where his fathers were buried, and that he might be allowed to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. The queen was sitting beside the king, and it was evidently a private conversation that followed. We are told that Artaxerxes inquired how long an absence Nehemiah had in mind, for he was evidently a valued servant whom the king did not intend to lose permanently. The rest of the talk is not related.

THE PETITION GRANTED. Then the king told Nehemiah he might go, and he had the answer to his many prayers. Moreover, the king gave Nehemiah letters to the satraps of the western province, with orders to the royal forester for timber for building the castle of Jerusalem (which is called in the New Testament the Castle of Antonia), for the walls of Jerusalem, and for Nehemiah's own house as governor. In a country so poorly timbered as Palestine such a forest would be very valuable. In all these grants Nehemiah rightfully saw the good hand of his God working for him.

THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. We have no particulars of Nehemiah's journey, except that, unlike Ezra, he accepted the military escort which the king was careful

to send with his valued servant and trusted commissioner. "Nehemiah would journey to Babylon, and from Babylon probably to Hamath and Damascus, which as the most important cities in Syria would be the residence of 'governors.' From Damascus he either journeyed along the east of the Jordan, crossing it at Jericho, or he crossed it by the usual fords south of the Lake of Galilee and visited Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. At Samaria there may very possibly have resided a Persian officer." — *Bishop Ryle.* It was a journey of about eight hundred miles and occupied Ezra about one hundred and eight days. Nehemiah, with a smaller company, doubtless made it in a shorter time.

PRAYER AND POWER. "Having said my prayer, let me go out and do it." — *Joseph Parker.*

"Prayer is either practical, capable of doing things, or it is absurd and even ridiculous." — *Hastings.*

"This is the meaning of prayer. We simply become that through which God manifests himself." — *S. D. Gordon.*

"My hands were strong in fancied strength,
But not in power divine,
And bold to take up tasks at length —
They were not His, but mine.
The Master came and touched my hands,
And mighty were His own;
But mine since then have powerless been,
Save His were laid thereon.
'And it is only thus,' said He,
'That I can work my works through thee.'"

LESSON X (36). — September 3.

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM. — Nehemiah 3 : 1—7 : 4.

PRINT Neh. 4 : 7–16.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Our God will fight for us.* — NEH. 4 : 20.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 48 : 1, 2, 9–14.
Reference Material : Neh. 2 : 9–20 ; 1 Cor. 3 : 9–17.
Primary Topic : HOW GOD HELPED NEHEMIAH BUILD A WALL.
Memory Verse : We made our prayer unto our God. Neh. 4 : 9.
Junior Topic : HOW A CITY WALL WAS REBUILT.
Memory Verse : Neh. 4 : 17.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : PRAYING, WATCHING, WORKING.
Topic for Young People and Adults : SUCCESS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND CO-OPERATION.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may be set to copying a simple outline of the ancient walls of Jerusalem which the teacher will set before them, marking the gates, the valleys, pools, brooks, and temple site. Tell the story of Nehemiah's circuit of the walls by night and get the pupils to tell it back to you. Print "Samaritans" then on the map and tell why they opposed Nehemiah. Produce one at a time four pasteboard arrows to indicate the forms their opposition took, marking the arrows "Ridicule," "Conspiracy," "Treason," and "Threats." Show how Nehemiah warded off each attack, and apply the whole to the enemies of the good in school, home, and on the streets.

The Older Classes, after reviewing the lesson story, will apply it to modern times under the heads : "Present-day enemies of the good," "How evil men to-day seek to defeat good plans," "How Christians will watch and work while they pray," "The sin of usury," "Nehemiah as an example to office-holders," "How to succeed in our religious undertakings." Appoint different persons to lead the discussion on each point.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — All the events of this lesson occurred (Beecher) in B. C. 444. At this time Pericles was supreme in Athens, and the Parthenon was built by Phidias. Euripides was writing his dramas.

Place. — Jerusalem, especially its wall.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The course of Nehemiah's wall.
The gates, their positions and names.
The character and work of Sanballat.
Usury in Bible times.
Taxes in Bible times.
Nehemiah as an example of a public official.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Praying, Watching, Working.

I. EARNEST WORK, Neh. 2 : 12—3 : 32 ; 4 : 6.
Nehemiah's midnight ride.
"Let us build."
Division of labor.
"A mind to work."

II. BITTER OPPOSITION, Neh. 2 : 10, 19, 20 ; 4 : 1–14.
Grieved at good.
The weapon of ridicule.
The weapon of conspiracy.
The weapon of treason.
The weapon of threats.
Enemies of the good.

III. FINAL SUCCESS, Neh. 4 : 15—7 : 4.
Watching and working.
Shaming the usurers.
Nehemiah's generous example.
Nehemiah's bold persistency.
"So the wall was finished."
The secret of true success.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Works on Nehemiah mentioned in the last lesson, especially *The Cambridge Bible*, *The New Century Bible*, Miller's *Devotional Hours*, Maclaren's *Expositions*, *The International Critical Commentary*, Butler's *Bible Work*, Parker's *People's Bible*, *The Pulpit Commentary*. Works on Jerusalem by George Adam Smith and Selah Merrill, describing the wall. Morrison's *The Footsteps of the Flock*. Poems, "Nehemiah's Night Ride," by Charles Tennyson Turner ; "Gashmu," by George Thomas Coster. Miss Havergal's *Royal Commandments*. McNeill's *Sermons, Vol. 1.*

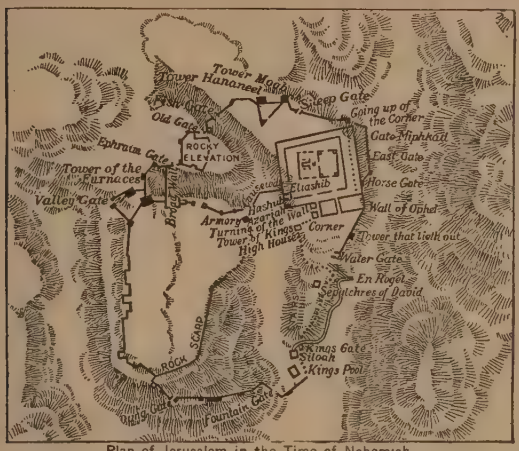
I. **EARNEST WORK,** Neh. 2 : 12 — 3 : 32 ; 4 : 6. NEHEMIAH'S MIDNIGHT RIDE. After Nehemiah's arrival from Persia he, like Ezra, spent three days in resting from the wearisome journey, in presenting his credentials, and in making the long and ceremonious Oriental salutations. He had not boasted of his purpose or told any one of his plans, but prudently wished first to see "the lay of the land." That he might get his information at first hand and secretly, he arose in the night and with only a few trusted attendants, and with only the animal on which he himself rode (probably not a horse but a surer-footed mule or ass), he passed around the ruined wall, noting how much work would need to be done in order to restore the wall and its various gates. His account of this survey is condensed, but gives the historian and antiquarian invaluable information regarding the outline and extent of the wall at that time, the names and positions of the various gates, the Brook Kidron, the King's Pool (Siloam), and other features. Much of his circuit Nehemiah had to stumble along on foot among the piles of rubbish, leading his mule.

Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem in order to rebuild those walls, but he showed his wisdom by discovering their real condition and how much work would need to be done on them before he began to discuss his plans with any one. He could then anticipate objections and be prepared to meet them. Many excellent projects, in religious and secular matters, fall through because their promotors have been too hasty and poorly informed.

"LET US BUILD." Nehemiah's next step was to call a meeting of the Jewish leaders, including the priests, the secular authorities, the heads of families, and representative workmen. He gave them an account of God's providential leading which had brought him to Jerusalem, not by any means forgetting the favor of the king. He pictured the desolate condition of the once powerful and splendid city, a condition which brought upon it the reproach of all beholders. It was a standing disgrace to the Jews. So ardent was Nehemiah's eloquence and so cogent his argument that the assembly shouted as one man, "Let us rise up and build!" It was an example of what one person of enthusiasm, courage, and faith can do to inspire many persons and lift them out of their Slough of Despond. If Nehemiah could do it for a city, you could do it for a village, a neighborhood, or a church and Sunday school.

DIVISION OF LABOR. Chapter 3, though it seems at first to be a mere list of hard names, is one of the most inspiring chapters of the Bible. It meant much to the many descendants of these men, just as one of us would be proud if our ancestor had built a portion of the Capitol at Washington, or Westminster Abbey.

The chapter is full of interesting points. The priests rebuilt the Sheep Gate, which seems to have been nearest the temple, probably so named because it was near the sheep market where sheep were bought for the sacrifices. The towers of the great fortress which commanded the temple are mentioned. The Fish



Plan of Jerusalem in the Time of Nehemiah.

Gate may have been near the fish market, and through it the fish were brought in from the Sea of Galilee.

The men of Jericho repaired the part of the wall nearest their town. The men of Tekoa (the town of Amos) were zealous in the work, but their nobles would have nothing to do with it. Contingents came from Gibeon (where the tabernacle once was) and Mizpah (where Samuel gathered the people and Saul was chosen king), both north of Jerusalem. The Tower of the Furnaces was used for bakers' ovens.

Shallum, the ruler of half of Jerusalem, was aided in his part of the work by his daughters. The Dung Gate was probably so called because the refuse of the city went out that way. The Fountain Gate, at the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys at the southeast corner of the city, was so named from its proximity to the King's Pool which watered the royal garden ; rocky steps ascended from the pool to the height of Mount Zion above.

The Nehemiah mentioned in this list was of course not Governor Nehemiah. The House of the Mighty Men was the barracks built by David for his body-guard, or at least on the site of it. Baruch was so zealous that of him alone it is said that he "earnestly repaired" his piece of the wall. Priests from Jericho and the other cities of the Plain around the Jordan did their bit.

We hear of the "upper house of the king," which was probably what was left of Solomon's palace and its successors, on Mount Zion. We hear of the Water Gate on the east, so called because it led to the great spring of Jerusalem, that of Gihon. Near it was the Horse Gate, so called because the king's horses were led through it to their stables.

We read of different guilds undertaking certain pieces of the work,— the goldsmiths, the apothecaries, the merchants. We note how often men were set to repairing the parts of the wall that were "over against" their own houses, a hint that if every one would only set right his own immediate concerns and surroundings, all the world would soon be righted. Also we note throughout the chapter the full application of the principle of division of labor, which has made possible the enormous industrial expansion of modern days, but which is evidently far from a modern discovery.

This is a fascinating chapter, well worth the most thorough and thoughtful study the reader can give it.

"A MIND TO WORK." "So we built the wall," Nehemiah writes with proud satisfaction. It was repaired in a complete circuit and to half the height of the old wall, which (Cambridge Bible) must have been 200 feet high ! Nehemiah gives a reason for the successful completion of the great task : "For the people had a mind to work."

"All true work calls for whole-heartedness. I heard of a gentleman who was talking to another about a mutual friend who had failed in business. And he said, 'No wonder that he failed ; he starved his work, he did not even put *himself* into it.' And we may be sure nothing will ever be built unless the builders put themselves into it. Is not God in creation a whole-hearted worker ? The tiniest weed that flowers among the stones is as finely perfect as the greatest cedar. Was not Christ in Galilee a whole-hearted worker ? He never dealt carelessly with any comer.

7. But it came to pass that, when Săn-băl'-lăt, and Tŏ-bī'-ăh, and the Arabians, and the Ăm'-mŏn-ītes, and the Ăsh'-dŏd-ītes, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth ;

8. And they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein.

And none of us will ever come to anything, or find life growing rich and deep and beautiful, unless we begin by having a mind to work." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

II. **BITTER OPPOSITION,** Neh. 2 : 10, 19, 20 ; 4 : 1–14. GRIEVED AT GOOD. It was probably when Nehemiah was on his way down from the north to Jerusalem that he first encountered Sanballat, and Tobiah, who was probably Sanballat's secretary. Samaria's old-time jealousy of Jerusalem, satisfied for a century and a half by the ruin of the Holy City, kept the two men in Samaria from rejoicing at the coming of Nehemiah with a royal permit to rebuild the walls of their ancient rival. Indeed, they grieved at the prospect of Jerusalem's welfare, and that fact is enough to show how despicable they were. How far they were from the Christian requirement of love to enemies !

THE WEAPON OF RIDICULE. While this work was in progress it was hindered in every possible way by the Samaritans. First Sanballat, their chief, tried ridicule, which is always the first weapon of cowards. Assembling his leaders and armed force, he addressed them : " What are these feeble Jews trying to do ? Will they build a fort ? Will they accomplish it by sacrificing ? Will they rear a wall in a day ? Will they pull out of the rubbish heaps those burned-out blocks of crumbling limestone and make them strong stones by a miracle ? " Then Tobiah his henchman added the taunt, " Why, even the light tread of a prowling jackal would break down their wall ! " They doubtless saw to it that these mockeries reached the ears of the toilers in Jerusalem. Nehemiah was fiercely angry, but chiefly because it seemed a mockery of Jehovah. He and his men went straight on with their task.

THE WEAPON OF CONSPIRACY. 7. **But it came to pass that, when Sanballat.** The sub-satrap of Samaria. His name is Babylonian and means " One whom Sin (the moon-god) preserves alive." **And Tobiah.** The servant (probably secretary) of Sanballat. Though his name ends in Jah, the contraction of Jehovah (Yahweh), he was a member of the heathen tribe of Ammonites, east of the Dead Sea. **And the Arabians.** Geshem (Neh. 2 : 19) — spelled also Gashmu (Neh. 6 : 6) — was their head, and had joined with Sanballat and Tobiah in ridiculing Nehemiah. The Assyrians in Sargon's time had established an Arab colony in depopulated Samaria, and these may have been the descendants of those Arabs ; or we may have evidence here that the tribes south of Judah joined in the movement against Nehemiah. **And the Ammonites.** The kindred of Tobiah. **And the Ashdodites.** Ashdod was one of the chief cities of the Philistines, on the Mediterranean coast west of Jerusalem. These, like the Ammonites, were hereditary foes of Jerusalem, and also the Arabians, if by them the Edomites are meant. The list seems to include the enemies of Judah from the north, east, south, and west, a formidable coalition. **Heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward.** The forces of evil are not aroused by the progress of the good so long as it is only on paper or confined to talk ; but when noble enterprises actually move forward, they are sure of opposition. **And that the breaches began to be stopped.** Some parts of the wall were much less broken down than others, as is seen in chapter 3, where one division repaired a thousand cubits (1,500 feet) of the wall, and other divisions only portions as wide as a house. **Then they were very wroth.** They had been angry before (verse 1) when they heard of the project ; they were doubly angry now that it was actually succeeding.

8. **And they conspired all of them together.** " Conspired " implies secret plotting, and also combined action. Evil prefers to work in darkness (John 3 : 19), and it is so cowardly that it loves combinations and associations. Bad men work in " gangs." **To come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein.** What was sought by this conspiracy was a sudden attack on Jerusalem which would, as the plotters hoped, cause a panic in the city and render its capture easy. Persia evidently allowed her remote provinces to fight among themselves about as they chose.

9. But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish ; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12. And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must return unto us.

13. Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set *there* the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

---

9. **But we made our prayer unto our God.** Ezra and Nehemiah are books of prayer. The spiritual defence was first thought of, because it was regarded as the main defence. So it was, and so it always is. **And set a watch against them day and night, because of them.** Faith and work, prayer and watching, go together ; each is nothing without the other. "Because of them" is translated by good scholars "in front of them"; that is, the watch was posted on the side of the city where the attack was expected, presumably the north.

THE WEAPON OF TREASON. 10. **And Judah said.** As if outside hindrances were not enough, Nehemiah had next to face the grumbling disaffection of his own people in Jerusalem. "Judah" means the people of Judah. **The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed.** The idea seems to have been that the force of builders was so depleted by withdrawing men to stand guard, and their physical powers so exhausted by the double toil of building and watching, that the work ought to be abandoned. **And there is much rubbish ; so that we are not able to build the wall.** It is hard for us to realize the amount of debris in a ruined city. Excavations have shown an ancient wall running down one hundred and twenty-five feet through the rubbish of modern Jerusalem. The clearing away of the rubbish fully doubled the difficulty of the task of wall-building.

THE WEAPON OF THREATS. 11. **And our adversaries said.** Some friend of Nehemiah may have reported to him the actual words of his opponents. **They shall not know, neither see.** They were planning a surprise attack on the city : "Before Nehemiah and his men know about it or catch sight of us, we'll be on them." **Till we come into the midst of them, and slay them.** By killing all the workers they would **cause the work to cease.** They were bloodthirsty enough, at least in talk.

12. **And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwelt by them came.** The Jews from the towns nearest the Samaritans and their allies, coming to Jerusalem added to Nehemiah's troubles. **They said unto us ten times from all places.** "Ten times" is a way of saying "many times," "over and over." Every town outside Jerusalem seems to have been represented in these urgings and fears. **Ye must return unto us.** They were talking in each case to their fellow townsmen at work on the wall, and they said, "So many men have been drawn off from our little town that we shall not be able to withstand the enemy when they come upon us on their way to Jerusalem. Come back, to defend your homes ! Let the men of Jerusalem take care of their own city !" It was the argument of selfishness.

13. **Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places.** Nehemiah, while maintaining the watch, now goes further and prepares actively against an attack, stationing his forces where the wall was lowest and in open spaces back of the wall so that they could move freely and oppose the enemy at any point where they might appear. **I set there the people after their families.** Men of a clan would fight better together than men of different clans. In most cases the men would simply be defending their own homes, "over against" which they had been working. **With their swords, their spears, and their bows.** The swords for hand-to-hand fighting, the spears when the enemy should be a little farther away, the bows to shoot at them from a distance.

14. **And I looked, and rose up.** Nehemiah looked over the ground, inspecting his troops, and noting evidences of fear among them. Remember that many of them had been in slavery all their lives. **And said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people.** The "nobles" were such aristocracy as the Jews had,

14. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them : remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16. And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail ; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.

---

the heads of their clans. The " rulers " were the city officials. **Be not ye afraid of them.** Fear is an ennobling emotion, when it is rightly directed — toward God ; it is the most weakening of emotions when it is directed toward man. **Remember the Lord, who is great and terrible,**— far greater and more terrible than the Samaritans. " The men who remember the Lord in his power and goodness are the men who rise up against all odds, and battle evil in high places and low, with never a thought of being overborne and defeated. A readiness to fight for God's cause is a test of loving, faith-filled remembrance of God." — *Henry Clay Trumbull.* **And fight for your brethren.** " A man who knows that God is on his side will watch and fight and work all the better for keeping this truth uppermost. It takes away from him the fear of man ' that bringeth a snare,' and puts the fear of God so high that all other fear disappears. Such a man is hard to beat, for he never knows when he is beaten." — *A. F. Schauffler.* And he always has the spirit of these words of Nehemiah, and fights for others more readily than for himself. **Your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.** " Nothing is said about fighting for God and his temple and city, but the motives adduced are not less sacred. Family love is God's best of earthly gifts." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

ENEMIES OF THE GOOD. Enemies of the good to-day take many forms, and are as persistent and resourceful as Sanballat. They assail our good intentions with ridicule, with infidel arguments, with worldly temptations. They use bad companions to lure us from our God-given tasks. Now they threaten and now they cajole. Now they wear the mask of friendship, and now they blaze in open warfare.

Every Christian has a wall to build, the wall of the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, which is made up of the noble lives of God's children. Against us are the hosts of Satan, trying in every way to hinder our progress. Nehemiah's experiences are a true parable of every genuine Christian life.

All enemies of the good are enemies of our own dear ones, and if we would fight for them we must fight against evils everywhere. " A distinguished man was speaking at the opening of a reformatory for boys, and remarked that if only one boy was saved from ruin by the institution it would pay for all the cost and labor. After the exercises were over, a gentleman asked the speaker if he had not put it a little too strongly when he said that all the cost of founding such an institution would be repaid if only one boy should be saved. ' Not if it were my boy,' was the quiet answer." — *J. R. Miller.*

III. **FINAL SUCCESS,** Neh. 4 : 15 — 7 : 4. WATCHING AND WORKING. 15. **And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us.** Their spies learned that Nehemiah had posted his troops, and so the plot of a surprise attack fell to the ground. **And God had brought their counsel to naught.** Nehemiah humbly took no credit to himself for the result ; he knew that he had been only the instrument in God's hands. **That we returned . . . every one unto his work.** " No time was wasted in jubilation. The work was the main thing, and the moment the interruption was ended, back to it they all went. It is a fine illustration of the persistent discharge of duty, and of that most valuable quality, the ability and inclination to keep up the main purpose of a life continuous through interruptions, like a stream of sweet water running through a bog."— *Alexander Maclaren.*

16. **And it came to pass from that time forth.** Until the wall was completed, they maintained a readiness to repel attack ; they " carried on." **That half of my servants wrought in the work.** The builders did not stop their work to go out

and fight Sanballat. "Every course of masonry laid was better than a hundred victories. They knew that it was God who had brought to nought the counsel of Sanballat, and they went on doing his work with all their might."— *Rev. A. Symington, D.D.* **And half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail.** This applies only to Nehemiah's "servants," his body-guard; they would be enough to sound the alarm and hold off an attack until the main body of citizens could arm. The spirit of this verse is still applied to human affairs: we still need armies, navies, and police, and in the church we still need controversialists and reformers who will keep on their armor and use their weapons. But, in church and state, constructive building is the main thing. The "coats of mail" were "leather coats covered with thin plates of bronze (see 1 Sam. 17 : 4). These are protrayed plentifully on the Assyrian and Egyptian monuments of the ninth century B. C. and later."—*Prof. T. W. Davies.* **And the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.** The heads of families took up a position in the rear of the workers of their respective clans, ready in case of attack to encourage and direct them. Nehemiah provided good leadership for each division of his greatly scattered forces.

Coat of Mail.

PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION. Nehemiah further ordered that the men who were carrying rubbish and clearing the way for the builders should always carry a weapon — probably a light javelin — in one hand while they did their work with the other hand. The actual builders would need both hands to manage the large blocks of stone, some of them (Merrill) six feet long and three feet thick; each of them wore a sword by his side, so as to be always ready to fight. Nehemiah was everywhere around the entire circuit of the wall, but kept a trumpeter with him, and gave orders that when the trumpet sounded all the warriors should hasten to the spot. Some workmen had been in the habit of leaving the city at night, perhaps to visit their homes in the villages round about. Nehemiah put a stop to that practice, for every man was needed to repel a possible night attack. As for himself, his brothers, his Hebrew and Persian bodyguard, during all this time of labor and peril they kept on their clothes, taking them off only for washing. These were all the practical measures of a man who combined in an extraordinary degree practicality with idealism.

SHAMING THE USURERS. Chapter 5 recounts Nehemiah's acts as governor during the rebuilding of the walls. The first matter that came up was the charge of profiteering brought by the poor against the rich, the nobles and the ruling classes. While the people were building the wall they could not till their fields or engage in commerce. They were obliged to buy food at exhorbitant rates, and mortgage their land to the wealthy at high interest, namely, twelve per cent. When they could not keep up their interest they were obliged to sell their own daughters to be the slaves of these rapacious Jews. Besides, the Persian taxes were very high, and they had to go still deeper into debt to pay them. Nehemiah held a mass meeting and protested against this hard-hearted profiteering so vehemently that the rich money-lenders were moved, and agreed to follow the requirement of the law, which forbade the taking of interest in dealings with other Jews, especially when they were poor. The entire episode duplicates the situation which existed during and at the close of the World War.

NEHEMIAH'S GENEROUS EXAMPLE. In this connection Nehemiah places on record the fact that during the twelve years of his governorship neither he nor his brothers accepted salaries from Persia, thus relieving that much the overtaxed Jews; and this in spite of the fact that the governors preceding him had not scrupled to take their salaries. Neither did Nehemiah make purchases of rich fields, though his predecessors had done so; he had no time for side issues and money-making. Moreover, Nehemiah regularly entertained at his table his entire force of officials, one hundred and fifty in number, besides many guests from outside Jerusalem, a company requiring each day an enormous quantity of meat and drink. With quaint frankness Nehemiah asks God to remember all the good he has done for his people.

NEHEMIAM'S BOLD PERSISTENCY. The wall was built, but was not quite finished, for the massive gates were not yet hung, when Sanballat and his assoicates made one

more attempt to check Nehemiah. They sent him an invitation to meet them for a conference at Ono, to the northwest, about six miles north of Lydda. Acceptance would mean Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem for several days, and his enemies doubtless intended to seize him or kill him on the way. But Nehemiah was far too shrewd to be caught thus, and made the famous answer, "*I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.*" Four times they sent for him and four times he answered in that decisive way.

The fifth time Sanballat sent his servant with a letter, open for all to read, in which he reported to Nehemiah the most absurd and shameful charges, *viz.*, that he, Nehemiah, was a rebel and seeking to be a king. Nehemiah answered indignantly that the charges were false, as Sanballat knew he would ; but the purpose of his open letter was to spread the charges.

The final effort of Tobiah, instigated by Sanballat, was the most subtle of all, considering Nehemiah's religious character. He bribed some of the prophets to try to intimidate the governor and so draw him away from his task. Especially a certain Shemaiah, a priest who was ceremonially unclean and so unable to enter the temple, urged Nehemiah to enter the Holy Place of the temple with him, thus violating two sacred laws, since Nehemiah was a layman and so could not lawfully enter the Holy Place at all ; but Shemaiah, in a burst of pretended prophecy, alleged that such a refuge was necessary to save their lives. Nehemiah was too shrewd for him also, saw that he had been bribed, and made the noble reply, "*Should such a man as I flee? or go into the temple to save his life?*"

"SO THE WALL WAS FINISHED." At last Nehemiah was able to say this. It had been a wonderfully swift accomplishment, for it had taken only fifty-two days ; but we must remember that the workers were numerous, that much of the wall was standing and needed only that the breaches should be filled up, and that much of the stone was in the rubbish heaps and needed only to be put again into place. The successful completion of the task filled Nehemiah's foes with chagrin and fear, and his friends with great joy. As for Nehemiah himself, he gave all the praise to his God.

THE SECRET OF TRUE SUCCESS. Nehemiah accomplished his great task because he put first things first. He allowed nothing to draw him aside from the thing that God had committed to his hands.

"We are engaged in a great work, and nine-tenths of us don't understand it. And it is because we have low, paltry views of the high calling whereunto we are called that we are so easily whirled around like weathercocks, and drawn aside by every temptation that comes in our way."— *Rev. John McNeill.*

Let us keep pleasure where it belongs, and gain, and fame, and ease, and all other lower goods. Let us exalt God's will above all. Then we shall have Nehemiah's success, and with it Nehemiah's everlasting honor and joy.

LESSON XI (37). — September 10.

TEACHING THE LAW OF GOD. — Nehemiah 8 : 1–18.

PRINT verses 1–3, 5, 6, 8–12.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of thy statutes: And I shall keep it unto the end.* — PS. 119 : 33.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 119 : 97–105.
Reference Material : Deut. 6 : 4–9 ; 2 Chron. 15 : 8–15 ; 30 ; Acts 17 : 1–9, 10–15, 16–34 ; 19 : 8–20 ; Col. 1 : 9–11.
Primary Topic : THE JOY OF LEARNING GOD'S WORD.
Lesson Material : Neh. 8 : 1–3, 5, 6, 8–12.
Memory Verse : Thy word have I laid up in my heart. Ps. 119 : 11.
Junior Topic : HOW A WHOLE CITY HEARD GOD'S WORD.
Lesson Material : Neh. 8 : 1–3, 5, 6, 8–12.
Memory Verse : Ps. 119 : 16.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD.
Topic for Young People and Adults : CO-OPERATIVE BIBLE STUDY.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in learning about one of the very first Bible schools ever held. Ask them to tell you at every step how Ezra's school was like those of our day, and how it was different.

The Older Classes may make this lesson the occasion for a careful and most useful study of their Bible-school work. Ask in advance that each member of the class come prepared to do three things : give a reason why we should study the Bible, give one method of Bible study that has been found helpful, and state one result of Bible study. Call on each in turn under each of these heads.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The seventh month (September-October) of Nehemiah's first year as governor, B. C. 444 (Beecher).

Place. — The public square at the Water Gate in the east wall of Jersualem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The law of Moses : nature and origin.
Plan and method of Ezra's Bible school.
Bible emphasis on the Bible.
Bible teachings on charity.
Origin and purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles.
Methods of Bible study taught in the Bible.
Results of Bible study shown in the Bible.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Co-operative Bible Study.

I. THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF BIBLE STUDY, vs. 1–4.
God's book of commandments.
A pioneer Sunday school.
Teaching and listening.
Why study the Bible ?

II. THE BEST METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY, vs. 5–8.
Prayer and Bible study.
Helps in Bible study.
How study the Bible ?

III. THE BLESSED RESULTS OF BIBLE STUDY, vs. 9–18.
Conviction of sin.
Joy and strength.
The spirit of hepfulness.
A week of Bible study.
What Bible study will do for us.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Books on Nehemiah and Ezra named in recent lessons. Hastings's Great Texts of the Bible on Neh. 8 : 10. Also Cox's *Biblical Expositions*, Clifford's *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, Matheson's *Rests by the River*, Dods's *Footsteps in the Path of Life*, Stowell's *Nehemiah*. Poem in Newton's *Olney Hymns*. Young's *Charms of the Bible*. Huntington's *The Charms of the Old Book*. Work's *The Fascination of the Book*. King's *Why We Believe the Bible*. Moore's *The Indispensable Book*. Faris's *The Romance of the English Bible*. Mears's *The Deathless Book*. Stalker's *The Beauty of the Bible*.

1. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate ; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel.

I. **THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF BIBLE STUDY,** vs. 1–4. GOD'S BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS. 1. **And all the people gathered themselves together as one man.** The close of the preceding chapter tells us that it was in the seventh month, the month Tisri (corresponding to our September-October), the most sacred month of the Jewish year, containing the chief festivals,— the Feast of Trumpets, the Great Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. In ancient times this month had begun the new year, so that it was especially suited to a new start in life such as was made during the events of our lesson. The festive season favored the assembling of the large crowds mentioned. **Into the broad place that was before the water gate.** The water gate was in the eastern wall of Jerusalem, and is supposed to have been so called because it led to the steps leading down to Jerusalem's chief spring, that of Gihon, " the Virgin's Spring." Open spaces or squares are found outside of Eastern gates, serving as market places, but this square seems to have been inside the gate, between the wall and the temple. **And they** (the people) **spake unto Ezra the scribe.** Ezra was a priest, descended from the high priest of the time of Zedekiah ; but he was also a scribe, and both titles are often given him, as in verse 9. " This is the first mention of Ezra in the present book, and the first proof we have had that he was contemporary with Nehemiah. It seems impossible that he should have been in Jerusalem during the events narrated in Neh. 2–6 and have played no part in them. Probably he returned to the court of Artaxerxes soon after effecting the reforms which he relates in Ezra 10, and did not revisit Jerusalem till about the time when the walls were completed. If he had thus returned after an absence of more than ten years, it would be natural for the people to request him to resume the work of exposition of the Law to which he had accustomed them on his former visit. (See Ezra 7 : 10, 25.) " — *Speakers' Commentary.* **To bring the book of the**

2. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3. And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand ; and the ears of all the people were *attentive* unto the book of the law.

---

law of Moses. What was this book? Conservative scholars say it was the Pentateuch, acknowledged thus to have been written by Moses. Radical scholars say it was a much smaller body of writings, not containing even the whole of what is called "the Priestly Code," though largely coinciding with it. **Which Jehovah had commanded to Israel.** It was the law of Moses, because he was the scribe ; but it was the law of God, because he was the Author. It rested on God's authority, not on that of Moses.

2. **And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly.** If Ezra was in Jerusalem during the months preceding, he had stepped aside, leaving the pre-eminence to Nehemiah, the man of action. Now that peaceful days had come, the man of thought steps to the front.

Illustration. "The situation may be compared with that of Savonarola in Florence when by sheer moral force he overtopped the power of the Medici, or that of Calvin at Geneva when the municipal council willingly yielded to the commanding spirit of the minister of religion because it recognized the supremacy of religion." — *Prof. Walter F. Adeney.* This is Nehemiah's modest attitude with reference to the older statesman, and it is shown in his own book, not in Ezra's.

Both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding. All the children that were old enough to understand the reading. "The assembly was composed of men, women, and children, a condition emphasized because it was unusual in Jewish practice." — *International Critical Commentary.* It remained for the spirit of Christianity to bring women and children into their full privileges and rights, and the Bible school is one of the institutions that have done the most to this great end. **Upon the first day of the seventh month.** "This was one of the festivals of the New Moon, termed in the Law the Feast of Trumpets and kept with special rites: Lev. 23 : 24, 25 ; Num. 29 : 1–6." — *Dummelow.*

Ezra Reading the Law.

3. **And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate.** Verse 4 tells us that Ezra stood on a wooden platform, so high that he could easily be seen and heard by all, and so broad that six men stood there with him on his right and seven men on his left, fourteen in all. These men, a list of whom is given, "were probably the chief priests of the course which was at the time performing the temple service." — *Speaker's Commentary.* At any rate, they were probably priests, though some think they were Levites, and they doubtless aided Ezra in the reading. **From early morning until midday.** "Or, 'from daylight.' He began as soon as it was light enough, and read on (he and his assistants —

5. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people) ; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

verse 7) till noon, that is, for six hours or more. The reading appears to have been varied by occasional exposition (verses 7, 8)." — *Rawlinson.*

Illustration. "Ezra's sermon that day was very long — from dawn till noon; yet no one seems to have got tired. We read that in Wyclif's days, when portions of the Bible which he had translated into English and had written out with a pen were carried among the people, so eager were they to hear the Word of God in their own language that they would gather in groups around the peat fires and would listen ofttimes all night, drinking in the precious sentences. The Book is so common now and we hear its words so frequently that it has not the interest to our hearts it should have." — *J. R. Miller.*

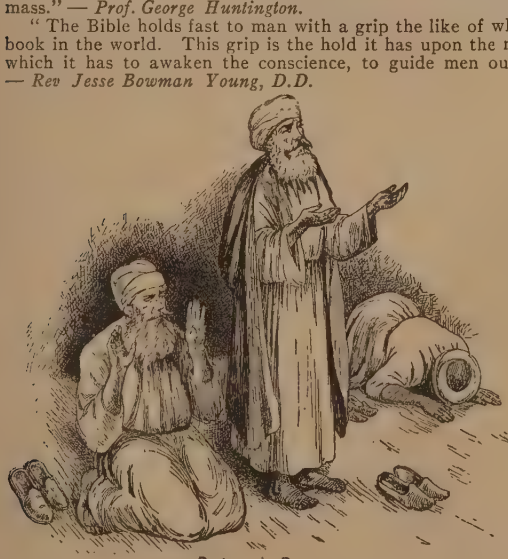
And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. "Attention" is from two Latin words that mean "stretching toward." The hearts of the people stretched out eagerly toward the Book as their bodies were bent in Ezra's direction, to miss no one of the precious words. Unless the soul is at attention, all our Bible reading and Bible study and all our Sunday-school work is valueless. Gaining attention is half the teacher's battle. Giving attention is the pupil's first duty and privilege.

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE? "Nehemiah lifts the thoughts of his hearers (in verse 10) to the God of joy and blessedness. They are not to rest in a book, however hallowed, but in the God of the book." — *Rev. John Clifford, D.D.* We are to avoid bibliolatry, but we are to love and revere the Bible as an unfailing guide to our Father in heaven.

We study the Bible, in the first place, because of its charm. "The Bible, though the most divine of books, is at the same time intensely, dramatically, humanly interesting." — *Rev. E. W. Work, D.D.*

It is necessary to know the Bible in order to understand secular books. "If the Biblical elements were taken out of secular literature it would be robbed of its finest material, and much of it would be reduced to a fragmentary and unintelligible mass." — *Prof. George Huntington.*

"The Bible holds fast to man with a grip the like of which is shown by no other book in the world. This grip is the hold it has upon the moral faculties, the power which it has to awaken the conscience, to guide men out of darkness into day." — *Rev Jesse Bowman Young, D.D.*



Postures in Prayer.

"Read the Bible; read the Bible. Through all my perplexities and distresses I never read any other book, and I never knew the want of any other." — *William Wilberforce, the eminent statesman and philanthropist.*

II. THE BEST METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY, vs. 5–8. PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY. 5. **And Ezra opened the book.** That is, "unrolled the parchment roll: see Luke 4 : 17. Bound books in the modern sense were not known until A. D. 300. Even then the writing material was parchment or vellum." — *New Cen-*

6. And Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God ; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands : and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.

8. And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly ; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

---

tury Bible. The parchment was in a long strip, unrolled from one roller and upon another as it was read, the rollers being held in the two hands. The writing was in narrow columns parallel to the rollers, one column being disclosed at a time. " The parchment was rolled upon the left-hand stick. On the right-hand stick the parchment was rerolled as the text was read — for the Hebrews read from right to left." — *Rev. John T. Faris, D. D.* **And when he opened it, all the people stood up.** " The Jews commonly sat to hear and stood up to pray; but in hearing they occasionally stood up, to do greater honor to the person or the occasion (see Judg. 3 : 20). It is not to be supposed that they stood during the whole of the six hours that Ezra's reading lasted." — *Pulpit Commentary.*

6. **And Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God.** Thus the Levites gave command for prayer (Neh. 9 : 5) at the making of the new national covenant, and David began with prayer his last address to the congregation of the people (1 Chron. 29 : 10). In a modern Jewish synagogue prayers are offered when the copy of the Law is taken from the place where it is kept and when it is put back again. All religious speech will be interwoven with prayer, uttered or unuttered. " The great God " is Nehemiah's expression, found again in Neh. 1 : 5 ; 9 : 32, and also in Ezra 5 : 8. **And all the people answered, Amen, Amen.** The literal meaning of " Amen " is " firm," " established," and it came to mean " firmly," " certainly," " assuredly." Christ often used it to begin a statement : " Verily," or, doubled for emphasis as here, " Verily, verily I say unto you." **With the lifting up of their hands.** " The attitude of spreading out the hands expressed the desire to receive and to embrace the divine gift, the hands open and the palms turned upward as if to accept." — *Cambridge Bible.* We are to pray in the certainty of receiving, in the very attitude and act of receiving. As has been said, if we pray for our ship to come in, we are to be at the wharf ready to greet it. **And they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.** The attitude of reverence is a great aid to reverence. Some are so proud that they will not even bow their heads before God, still less bend their knees or fall on their faces as Orientals do in their earnestness.

Verse 7 gives us the names of the Levites who, after a priest had read a short portion of the law, explained it to the people, translating it out of the Hebrew into the common Aramaic language, and giving a running commentary on difficult passages. The Levites may have taken turns addressing the entire assembly, or each may have had a group around him, like our Sunday-school classes, with whom he talked in a more conversational tone.

HELPS IN BIBLE STUDY. 8. **And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly.** They made every word heard by every person. Whoever addresses a company, large or small, owes it to them and to himself to speak so loudly and plainly that all can hear. The person farthest away should be addressed, and not, as so often in cowardly fear or false modesty, the person nearest the speaker. **And they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.** If these Jews, so near to the time when the Bible was written, living in the land of the Bible, practising Bible customs, even having in their meeting two men who were to write Bible books, nevertheless needed commentaries on the Bible, how much more do we, living in a far distant age and in a remote country with very different customs and modes of thought, and speaking an entirely different language! The Bible is " its own interpreter " only after we are sure we have the plain sense of each passage, and we do dishonor to the Book when we do not avail ourselves of the living teachers and the books and papers that throw a flood of light upon God's Word

HOW STUDY THE BIBLE? 1. Every one should read the Bible straight through, to find out what is in it, get the broad sweep of revelation, and make discoveries of portions for further study.

2. Large portions should be read at a sitting, often whole books at a time. Even then we shall not be reading more of the Bible at once than of many other books.

3. One of the most fruitful methods is the study of the Bible by books, using special commentaries and seeking to master one book before going on to another.

9. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God ; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared ; for this day is holy unto our Lord : neither be ye grieved ; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

---

4. Bible study by topics is fascinating and helpful, using a Bible index and reading all the Bible says on the great themes, such as sin, salvation, love, heaven, service, prayer, Christ, the Holy Spirit.

5. Use the best and fullest commentaries and Bible dictionaries. Refer constantly to the Bible atlas. Read the most accurate translation — the American Revision.

6. Frequently review what you have read. Meditate upon it. Commit Bible passages to memory. Mark your Bible with initials in the margin, calling attention, for instance, to verses on prayer by the letters " Pr."

7. There is no more inspiring method of Bible study than our Sunday schools afford, with the guidance of a wise teacher, the stimulus of discussion, the contact with other minds, and the spur of regular meetings. Solitary study can never bear its best fruits unless it is vivified by social study.

8. Bible study must be prayerful. The Holy Spirit will take of the things of Christ and show them to us. He is the final Teacher of the Bible.

9. Never allow your Bible study to end with the study. Without works it is dead. Imitate Ezra's Bible school and, having learned from the Book, go forth to practise it in your life.

III. **THE BLESSED RESULTS OF BIBLE STUDY,** vs. 9–18. CONVICTION OF SIN. 9. **And Nehemiah, who was the governor.** The " Tirshatha," as he was called,— a title given also to Zerubbabel, the leader of the first return. **And Ezra the priest the scribe.** Here we have the recognition of both sides of Ezra's life. **And the Levites that taught the people.** Instruction in the law was the highest function of the Levites. **Said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God.** It was a festival day, a day of rejoicing ; see on verses 1, 2. **Mourn not, nor weep.** Nehemiah did not think it seemly that the day of praise to God should be marred by their sorrow, even though it was godly sorrow over their sins. **For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.** Thus King Josiah had mourned when the book of the law was discovered in the temple (2 Kings 22 : 11, 19). Conviction of sin always follows the understanding of God's law. When our lives are brought up against God's perfect standard of righteousness, we see how crooked they are. The first aim of all religious teaching is to make persons see themselves as they are, in all their sinfulness and their great need of a Saviour.

JOY AND STRENGTH. 10. **Then he said unto them.** Probably Ezra. but possibly Nehemiah. **Go your way.** The Bible school, which had been in session for six hours or more, was dismissed. **Eat the fat, and drink the sweet.** The sorrow and shame of the people might lead to fasting, but they were not to fast on that feast day, but to eat and drink of the best. The fat was regarded a great delicacy, and so was especially offered to God when animals were sacrificed. " The sweet drink was presumably the new sweet wine." — *International Critical Commentary.* **And send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared ;** that is, the poor. Deut. 16 : 14 commands that in the Feast of Tabernacles thought should be taken for " the sojourner, and the fatherless, and the widow." Christ commanded his followers (Luke 14 : 12–14), when they made a feast, not to invite friends, kinsmen, or rich neighbors who could reciprocate the attention, but the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. **For this day is holy unto our Lord.** The speaker was not afraid of repeating himself. Repetition is one of the greatest secrets of successful teaching. **Neither be ye grieved.** This is a command, and implies that we can control our feelings and not let them control us. Thus also Christ commanded his disciples, "*Let* not your heart be troubled." **For the joy of Jehovah is your strength.** This is the most famous sentence in the book of Nehemiah. " While sorrow depresses and unnerves us, joy gives

11. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy ; neither be ye grieved.

12. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

---

us new heart and vigor. If we go to any task in a gay, hopeful spirit, we are likely to do it well ; while a dejected and fearful heart is only too likely to insure the failure it anticipates and dreads. But if all joy is strengthening, how much more the joy of the Lord ! If God is our chief good, our supreme joy, as He does not change, our joy cannot change." — *Hastings.*

Illustration. " Pope Clement the Seventh died of sorrow for a defeat ; but his successor, Leo the Tenth, died of exultation for a victory. Personal excitement, whether through laughter or through tears, paralyzes the work of the hour. If in the midst of writing an article you heard that you had come into a great fortune, I do not think you would write a line more that day. But if you heard the same news of one whom you loved, and whose poverty had given you pain, you would be fanned by an inspiration which would make the pen fly. What makes the difference ? It is this — the one is the joy of the flesh ; the other is the joy of the Lord." — *Rev. George Matheson, D.D.*

Illustration. " I met an old man a day or two ago who had spent half a century in the secret place with God. And at the end of fourscore years his joy is as ripe as autumn fruit. ' Why, you are quite a marvel,' said one of his friends. ' No, no ; it is my Lord who is the marvel,' replied the saint, who has dwelt so long in the holy place." — *J. H. Jowett.*

' Let thy day be to thy night
A letter of good tidings. Let thy praise
Go up as birds go up, that when they wake
Shake off the dew and soar. So take Joy home,
And make a place in thy great heart for her,
And give her time to grow and cherish her ;
Then will she come and oft will sing to thee
When thou art working in the furrows, ay,
Or weeding in the sacred hour of dawn.
It is a comely fashion to be glad, ——
Joy is the grace we say to God."
— *Jean Ingelow.*

" Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil ;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

" But when the Lord has planted grace,
And made his glories known,
There fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone."
— *John Newton.*

" Why should any be miserable when in Christ there is full provision for the happiness of every child of Adam ? " — *Hugh Stowell.*

" Whatever God is, he is for us." — *John Clifford.*

" You cannot praise God more acceptably than by a frank enjoyment of his gifts." — *Samuel Cox.*

11. **So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace.** " In order to guard against uttering words ill-suited to a holy day." — *Dummelow.*

THE SPIRIT OF HELPFULNESS. 12. **And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink.** This does not mean that they ceased to be sorry for their sins, but that for the present they refrained from the outward expression of their sorrow. " The Day of Atonement was coming for that, as also the special day of fasting and covenant which was already in the plan of Nehemiah and Ezra." — *Ellicott.* **And to send portions.** We have not caught the spirit of the Bible, and therefore our Bible study is fruitless, unless we have caught the spirit of helpfulness and show it in our deeds. God wants us to have a good time, but " having a good time all alone is not the ideal of Christian gladness. When we are prosperous we should not forget those who are poor. When we are happy in our home of love, with unbroken circle, we should not forget the families about us that are in sorrow and bereavement. The good things which God gives us are not meant for ourselves alone — they are given to us to be shared. Only in the sharing do we get the best of them ourselves." — *J. R. Miller.* **And to make great mirth.** " ' Great rejoicing,' not ' mirth ' in the sense which the word now commonly bears." — *Rawlinson.* **Because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.** " They had felt the reasonableness of the words addressed to them by Nehemiah and Ezra (verses 9, 10)." — *Speaker's Commentary.*

A WEEK OF BIBLE STUDY. Bible study of the right kind gives a hunger for more Bible study. The day after Ezra's Bible school the leaders of the people assembled

Tabernacles. (Booths.)
Made from bushes and branches of trees.

for further instruction in the Word of God, and on that day they heard the commands for the observance of the harvest festival, the Jewish Thanksgiving, the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) ; see Ex. 23 : 16 ; Lev. 23 : 39–43 ; Num. 29 : 12–38 ; Deut. 16 : 13, 15. In glad obedience — an obedience that had not been rendered fully since the days of Joshua (Jeshua) the son of Nun — they made booths of the boughs of the cultivated and wild olive, of the palm and myrtle, in memory of the days of wilderness journeyings, and set them on the flat roofs and in the courts of the houses, in the court of the temple, and in the public squares of the city.

And every day through all the eight days of the feast, Ezra read from the Book of the Law. It was a week — and more than a week — of Bible study. We may be sure that each day added to the impressions made, and that the people gained far more from the eight days of continuous study than from eight days of study separated from each other by seven weeks.

WHAT BIBLE STUDY WILL DO FOR US. "The acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God results in the growing enlightenment of the people, higher standards of personal and social life, and systematic works of charity and love."—*Henry Melville King.*

The Bible will comfort us in sorrow, guide us in perplexity, strengthen us in our weakness, encourage us in times of doubt and failure and fear. The Bible will bring our Saviour near, will quicken our faith, inspire our prayers. The Bible is an unfailing friend, an ever-wise companion. Its treasures are inexhaustible, its wisdom never fails. Happy indeed is the soul that rests upon Holy Writ.

"Holy Bible, Book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine !
Mine to tell me whence I came,
Mine to tell me what I am,
Mine to chide me when I rove,
Mine to show a Saviour's love ;
Mine art thou to guide my feet,
Mine to judge, condemn, acquit ;
Mine to comfort in distress,
If the Holy Spirit bless ;
Mine to show by living faith
Man can triumph over death ;
Mine to tell of joys to come
And the rebel sinner's doom : —
Holy Bible, Book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine!"—*John Burton*

LESSON XII (38). — September 17.

THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI. — Malachi 3 : 1—4 : 3.

PRINT Mal. 3 : 7–18.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts.* — MAL. 3 : 7.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 32 : 1–7.
Reference Material : 2 Kings 17 : 7–23 ; Isa. 6 ; Jer. 1 : 7–10 ; Ezek. 2 : 1–7 ; Acts 20 : 35 ; 1 Cor. 16 : 1, 2 ; 2 Cor. 8 : 1—9 : 15.
Primary Topic : GOD'S PROMISE OF THE SAVIOUR'S COMING.
Lesson Material : Mal. 3 : 1, 16, 17 ; 4 : 2.
Story Material : Luke 2 : 25–39.
Memory Verse : He loved us, and sent his Son. 1 John 4 : 10.
Junior Topic : OFFERINGS THAT PLEASE GOD.
Lesson Material : Mal. 3 : 7–18.
Memory Verse : Mal. 3 : 10.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: WHAT WE SHOULD GIVE TO GOD.
Topic for Young People and Adults : WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT GIVING.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes are not too young to learn Bible principles of giving, and these may be instilled in connection with this lesson. It will be the best of beginnings if they are taught to lay aside for God one-tenth of the small sums that come to them, keeping regular accounts, and then when they grow up the good habit will be applied to their larger incomes.

The Older Classes will be asked to read the entire book of Malachi in preparation for the lesson, one member of the class being detailed to present the results of a special study of it. Another member may be asked to write and read to the class a ten-minute essay giving a condensation of Jewish history between Malachi and John the Baptist. You may have a debate, one member presenting the arguments for tithing and another saying what can be said against it. This will lead to a general discussion of the matter of giving as applied to your Sunday school, church, and denomination. The church treasurer may lead the discussion.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Beecher places Malachi at B. C. 428, during Nehemiah's second administration. The Peloponnesian war was raging at the time, and Socrates, Alcibiades, and Aristophanes were living in Greece. Artaxerxes was still king of Persia.

Place. — Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

What is known of Malachi.
The book of Malachi.
Messianic foregleams in Malachi.
Tithes throughout the Bible.
The heavenly record.
The judgment day in the Old and New Testaments.
The true motives of religion.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : What We Should Give to God.

I. MALACHI AND HIS BOOK, Mal. 3 : 1–6.
The prophet and his activity.
The book and its contents.
The forward look to Christ.

II. GOD'S BOOK OF ACCOUNTS, Mal. 3 : 7–12.
"Will a man rob God ?"
"Bring the whole tithe."
"I will pour you out a blessing."
Bible principles of giving.

III. GOD'S BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE, Mal. 3 : 13—4 : 3.
"What profit ?"
"They shall be mine."
"Behold, the day cometh."
From Malachi to John the Baptist.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Eiselen's *Prophecy and the Prophets.* Fowler's *The Prophets as Statesmen and Preachers.* Harper's *The Post-Exilic Prophets.* Duhm's *The Twelve Prophets.* George Adam Smith's *The Minor Prophets* in *The Expositor's Bible.* Moss's *From Malachi to Matthew.* Prof. J. M. P. Smith in *International Critical Commentary.* Driver in *The New Century Bible.* Farrar's *The Minor Prophets* ("Men of the Bible" series). Barnes in *The Cambridge Bible.* Marcus Dods in *Handbooks for Bible Classes.* On the tithe, Rigby's *Christ our Creditor.* On giving, McConaughy's *Money the Acid Test.*

7. From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return?

I. **MALACHI AND HIS BOOK,** Mal. 3 : 1–6. THE PROPHET AND HIS ACTIVITY. After the events that we have studied Nehemiah was recalled to the Persian court, but returned to Jerusalem after a few years and seems to have governed the city for the rest of his life. It was during this second administration that Malachi prophesied.

"Malachi" means "My Messenger," and many have thought that the words of Mal. 3 : 1 were thus taken up into the title of the book, and that the author is unknown; some have believed that Ezra wrote the book. But all the other names prefixed to the "minor prophecies" are those of real persons, and it is probable, therefore, that Malachi was the actual name of this prophet, and that he was playing on his own name in Mal. 3 : 1.

Nothing is known of Malachi except what may be conjectured from his brief prophecy. "He is an eager defender of purity of worship, and he disputes with his opponents like a veritable scribe." — *Prof. Bernhard Duhm.* "He was a man of deep convictions born of a personal religious experience and constant communion with God, a man with deep insight into the needs and shortcomings of his contemporaries and into the mysteries of the divine love and purpose." — *Prof. F. C. Eiselen.* "In spirit he rises as a true prophet of old above the despair and indifference of his contemporaries, and, with a reformer's zeal, attacks the sins of the people and of the religious authorities of his day. Yet he is no narrow reformer, for in the midst of his teachings we come upon an utterance that almost staggers us by its breadth. He recognizes that there is worship among the Gentiles which, in its sincerity, is acceptable to Jehovah (Mal. 1 : 11 — which in the Hebrew has the present tense throughout)." — *Prof. Henry T. Fowler.*

THE BOOK AND ITS CONTENTS. "The eight sections of the book of Malachi contain many things of perennial interest and validity: their truth is applicable, their music is still musical, to ourselves. But their chief significance is historical. They illustrate the development of prophecy within the law. Malachi observes and enforces the demands of the Deuteronomic law under which his people had lived since the return from exile. But he traces each of these to some spiritual principle, to some essential of religion in the character of Israel's God, which is either doubted or neglected by his contemporaries in their lax performance of the Law. That is why we may entitle his book 'Prophecy within the Law.'" — *George Adam Smith.*

The theme of the book is God's special love for his people, their turning from God's love, the imminent punishment, and an earnest call to repentance. The book — and with it the Old Testament — closes with a glimpse of the day of the Messiah, and a prophecy that another Elijah would be his herald,— a prophecy fulfilled in John the Baptist.

THE FORWARD LOOK TO CHRIST, Mal. 3 : 1–6. This passage is one of the most glorious of Messianic prophecies, and one of the clearest. It is quoted by Christ himself and applied by him to John the Baptist (Matt. 11 : 10; Luke 7 : 27; compare Mark 1 : 2). "*Malachi*, My Messenger, shall come," says the prophet, "preparing his royal way before the King. The Lord shall come to his temple, suddenly, unexpectedly, fulfilling the long covenant. He shall judge men, and shall punish all evildoers. And he shall work out his changeless mercies toward his people." There is no element in the wonderful picture but was taken up, illustrated and fulfilled, in the life of Jesus Christ.

II. **GOD'S BOOK OF ACCOUNTS,** Mal. 3 : 7–12. 7. **From the days of your fathers.** Their forefathers beginning with the days of Moses; for as soon as the law was given at Sinai, the Jews began to break it. The same charge was made by Stephen in his address before his martyrdom, Acts 7 : 51–53. **Ye have turned aside from mine ordinances.** God's laws are a straight way, but the people had wandered from it into bypaths. This charge was constantly made by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as in Jer. 7 : 25–28; 25 : 3–7; Ezek. 20 : 5–26. **And have not kept them.** To keep God's laws is in the first place to keep them in the heart, cherishing them there; and in the second place it is to honor them outwardly, acting in obedience to them. We shall not do the second if we do not do the first. **Return unto me.** The metaphor is again that of a road from which the Jews had wandered, the road in which God was walking and wished them to walk in it beside him; or perhaps it is the thought of

8. Will a man rob God ? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee ? In tithes and offerings.

9. Ye are cursed with the curse ; for ye rob me, even this whole nation.

10. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough *to receive it.*

God's home from which the Jews had run away, or his kingdom and rule to which they had been traitors. All sin is a turning from God, alienation from him ; and there is only one thing for the sinner to do, and that is to repent, turn his back upon his sin and his face once more toward his God. **And I will return unto you.** This promise was also given through Zechariah ; see Zech. 1 : 3. As the sinner turns from God, God seems to turn from the sinner. " If man looks toward God, he sees the loving face of God ; but if man turns his back on God, he misses that loving face, and then he is inclined to think that God has become his enemy. There is only one cure for such a trouble as this, and that is for the changeful man to turn back again to the unchanging God." — *Henry Clay Trumbull.* **Saith Jehovah of hosts.** " The meaning of this title is that all created agencies and forces are under the leadership or dominion of Jehovah, who made and maintains them. It is used to express Jehovah's great power." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* This is the God from whom the Jews were running away !

Illustration. " What a school God keeps ! What stubborn scholars, what dense minds, what rebellious hearts ! Yet the school is not closed. Still the school goes on, still the scholars are reading and writing, and praying and thinking , now and again God visits the school and sheds tears over it, but still he will not close its doors, or withdraw his light from its windows." — *Joseph Parker.*

But ye say, Wherein shall we return ? " In what matters have we strayed from God, that we must return ? " the people ask, hypocritically. " The question is not *bona fide,* but a virtual declaration of innocence. It calls for facts." — *International Critical Commentary.*

8. **Will a man rob God ?** *Man* is emphatic in the original. Will *man,* this creature of the dust, dare to rob the infinite and all-powerful Jehovah ? It seems incredible. **Yet ye rob me.** The seeming impossibility has happened. Man has dared to defraud his Creator. **But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee ?** " The quibbling, self-justifying spirit of the Jews is illustrated by this question — a spirit which survived in the man who, willing to justify himself, said, ' And who is my neighbor ? ' " — *Speaker's Commentary.* **In tithes and offerings.** " These were due to the Lord, and therefore in withholding them they were defrauding not man but God." — *Deane.* " ' Ye have defrauded me,' answers Jehovah, ' even in that in which ye pride yourselves as being most exact, in the least things ; how much more, then, in the greatest ? " — *Rev. Samuel Cox, D.D.* The custom of tithing (of giving the tenth to God) is very ancient. Jacob at Bethel agreed to pay tithes to God, if God would prosper him. The Mosaic law required for God a tithe of all flocks and herds and of the fruit of the ground. Cattle were " passed beneath the rod " and every tenth animal was marked for Jehovah. Grain was threshed before it was tithed and grapes made into wine and olives into olive oil. If a Jew lived at a distance from the temple, he might convert his tithes into money and thus take them to Jerusalem.

9. **Ye are cursed with the curse.** What the curse was we see in the next two verses : the crops failed and there was a scarcity of food in the land. **For ye rob me, even this whole nation.** It was not only as individuals that they withheld from God his due, but the sin was so extensive that the entire nation was involved in it.

10. **Bring ye the whole tithes into the store-house.** The phrase, " the whole tithe," implies that many of the people had brought only a part of their tithes, thinking to enrich themselves by cheating God. The store-house was a chamber in the court of the temple set apart for the reception of tithes **That there may be food in my house.** We must remember that these tithes of grain, fruit, and meat supported the priests and Levites as they served in the temple. **And prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts.** Test the matter by paying tithes, Jehovah says, and see if I will not return to you and to the nation in blessings. God never objects to testings of his truth and his goodness. **If I will not open the windows of heaven.** " The win-

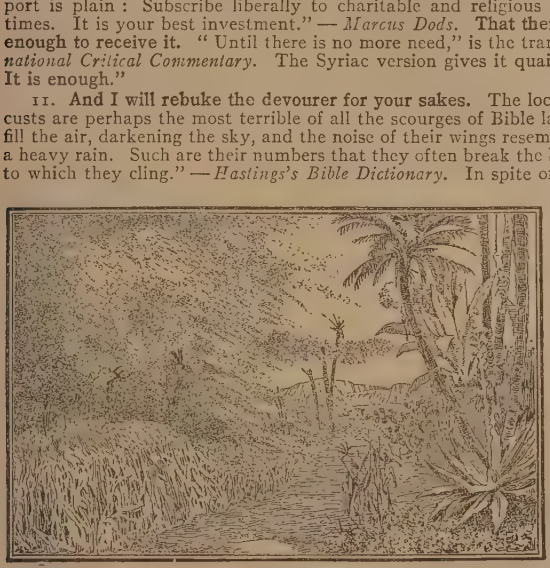
11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground ; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts.

12. And all nations shall call you happy ; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts.

---

dows of heaven " are opened to let out the rain, that abundant harvests may come. Those windows are said to have been opened when the flood came in Noah's day (Gen. 7 : 11), and closed when the flood ceased (Gen. 8 : 2 ; compare 2 Kings 7 : 2, 19). This promise is a repetition of the thought in Deut. 11 : 13–15. See in 2 Chron. 31 : 4–10 an account of just this result following the faithful paying of the tithe. Evidently there had been a drought in Palestine, perhaps such a great drought as visited the land in the days of Elijah, and this is a promise that the drought shall be b-oken. **And pour you out a blessing**, even though it is a time of famine and want. " The purport is plain : Subscribe liberally to charitable and religious objects even in bad times. It is your best investment." — *Marcus Dods.* **That there shall not be room enough to receive it.** " Until there is no more need," is the translation of the *International Critical Commentary.* The Syriac version gives it quaintly, " until ye say, It is enough."

11. **And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes.** The locust is meant. " Locusts are perhaps the most terrible of all the scourges of Bible lands. Their swarms fill the air, darkening the sky, and the noise of their wings resembles the pattering of a heavy rain. Such are their numbers that they often break the branches of the trees to which they cling." — *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.* In spite of all the exertions of the people against them, they convert into a desert the unfortunate land where they light. But God, if the people obey him, will drive these pests away. **And he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground.** The locusts " eat every green thing, even stripping the bark off the trees." — *Hastings.* **Neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts.** The dropping of the green grapes because of mildew or blasting is referred to ; God will bring them to ripeness and perfection.



From an old English print.

A Cloud of Locusts.

12. **And all nations shall call you happy.** It adds greatly to blessedness to have it recognized by others. **For ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts.** The same thought is exquisitely expressed in Isa. 62 : 4. The idea is twofold : that God *delights* in the land, and that therefore it is a *delightful* land ; the two always go together as cause and effect.

BIBLE PRINCIPLES OF GIVING. 1. Our gifts to men must have God as their primary object and thought. " Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase " (Prov. 3 : 9). " He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord " (Prov. 19 : 17).

2. Giving should be done modestly, and not with ostentation. " When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth " (Matt. 6 : 3). " He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity " (Rom. 12 : 8).

13. Your words have been stout against me, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, What have we spoken against thee?

14. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?

15. And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up; yea, they tempt God, and escape.

---

3. Only willing gifts are acceptable to God. "Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering" (Ex. 25 : 2). "Not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful (literally, *hilarious*) giver" (2 Cor. 9 : 7 : see also Philem. 14.)

4. Giving should be methodical, systematic. If we do not keep accounts of our receipts and our gifts, we shall quite certainly think we are giving more than we are. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16 : 2). "To do good and to communicate forget not" (Heb. 13 : 16).

5. Our gifts should be proportioned to our ability, and should grow as it grows. "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee" (Deut. 16 : 17). "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. 8 : 12).

6. The tithe is a reasonable standard of giving for the average income. Just as we keep one-seventh of our time especially sacred to the Lord, and thereby are helped to serve God with all our time, so if we set apart one-tenth of our money as peculiarly God's we are helped to use in God's service all that we have. Our Lord said even of the tithing of "mint and anise and cummin," "*these ye ought to have done*," while not leaving weightier duties undone (Matt. 23 : 23).

7. Generous giving is rewarded by God, in this world and in the world to come. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth. The liberal soul shall be made fat" (Prov. 11 : 24, 25). "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11 : 1). "Give and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6 : 38). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20 : 35). "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9 : 6).

III. **GOD'S BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE**, Mal. 3 : 13—4 : 3. 13. **Your words have been stout against me, saith Jehovah.** "Your words are insufferable, they compel me to expostulate. The Hebrew conveys the idea of urgent insistence, or importunate iteration (compare Ex. 12 : 33)." — *Marcus Dods*. **Yet ye say, What have we spoken against thee?** Literally, "conversed against thee?" They had not ventured to say these things to God, but they had come out in their conversation with one another. It is well for a man if he would gladly lay his familiar conversation before God.

14. **Ye have said, It is vain to serve God.** "Vain" means "useless." These murmurs were evidently common in Malachi's day and they are not uncommon to-day. "What's the use of going to church?" men ask. "Religious people don't get on any better than people who make no pretence to religion." **And what profit is it that we have kept his charge.** This is a material and commercial view of religion. It sees no profit except in dollars and cents, fine houses, high station, pleasure and luxury. It has no conception of the unspeakable profits of the soul, the love of God, the joy of communion with him, the supreme delight of doing his will. **And that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?** "Walked mournfully" may mean "gone in black," or in mourning; or it may mean "gone dirty," that is, as men when they fast and do not wash their faces or anoint their heads. This is the absurd idea of religion that most irreligious persons have: that it means gloom, deprivation, and harshness.

15. **And now we call the proud happy.** The complaint of the worldling continues. "'Proud' is a common Biblical expression for 'presumptuous sinners'; the same word is also used for 'presumptuous sins' (Ps. 19 : 13)." — *Ellicott*. "Such persons are really the happy ones," Malachi hears the worldlings say. "and not your punctilious tithe-prayers and church-goers." **Yea, they that work wickedness are built up.** Their fortunes are built up, their reputations are exalted, their power is increased.

16. Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another ; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name.

17. And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, *even* mine own possession, in the day that I make ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

This common problem is thoroughly and masterfully treated in Ps. 73, which should be read in this connection. **Yea, they tempt God, and escape.** " Tempt " here is the same word as " prove " in verse 10, but with what a difference in the real meaning ! The obedient test God's promises, confidently expecting a blessing ; the wicked test God's forbearance, arrogantly expecting to escape the penalty. And often they do escape, but only for a time.

16. **Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another.** They talked of the fear of Jehovah and the obedience due to the Lord. These doubts so freely uttered by the skeptics made such religious conversations necessary for the maintenance of faith. The power of evil in the world renders it no less necessary to-day that the good should often consult together, as in church prayer meetings and other religious gatherings. **And Jehovah hearkened, and heard.** It is heartening to know that God listens to every word spoken in the fear and love of him. Men may not listen sympathetically, but there is always one Auditor who is pleased. **And a book of remembrance was written before him.** " The book represents God's providence and omniscience, his ever-wakeful care, his unfailing knowledge. The idea is taken from the national records wherein were noted events of importance, such as we find in the cuneiform inscriptions." — *Rawlinson.* We have recently noted an instance of such a " book of remembrance " in the story of Mordecai, Esth. 6 : 1–3, where in the original the same words are used as here. " Every word of encouragement spoken to a weary fellow-toiler, every word of sympathy and comfort to an afflicted spirit, every word of quickening to diligence and activity in the Christian life, every kind, generous, loving word that has helped and cheered a struggling, tempted fellow soul, is heard, remembered, and recorded, and one day shall be disclosed again to the mutual, grateful joy of the helper and the helped." — *Rev. J. G. Butler, D.D.* **For them that feared Jehovah.** The fear of God is not the sum of religion or the end of it ; " the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom " only. But it is a good beginning, and leads straight onward to obedience to God and the love of God. **And that thought upon his name.** " Thinking upon " God's name means meditating on his character, so fixing upon God the regard of one's mind that one grows to be like God in one's own character. It means far more than mere intellectual acquiescence in definitions and doctrines.

17. **And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, even mine own possession.** " They should be as jewels in his treasure-house." — *Farrar.* And of course God will take good care of what he owns. **In the day that I make.** The reference is to the judgment day (see Mal. 4 : 1), which is a day made by Jehovah for the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous, the culmination of the very distinction which the doubters of Malachi's day were doubting. **And I will spare them.** God's justice cannot spare unrepentant sinners, but his loving mercy will spare all that turn back from their sins to their Father. **As a man spareth his own son that serveth him.** Deut. 21 : 18–21 describes the fearful punishment laid down for " a stubborn and rebellious son." On the contrary, a loving and obedient son is loaded with blessings. Remembering this, with what depth of gratitude we read the words, " God spared not his own Son " ! (Rom. 8 : 32.)

18. **Then shall ye return.** " Then " refers to the judgment day, just mentioned. On that day the murmurers shall return from their present skepticism in regard to the justice of God, his rewards of the good and punishment of the wicked. **And discern between the righteous and the wicked.** Perceive that it does make a vast difference in eternity whether one is wicked or righteous, whatever may be the apparent confusions and failures of justice on earth. **Between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.** God-servers and God-disdainers — the difference between the two

is as wide as the universe, vast as eternity. "Every idle moment is treason; now it is time for unceasing efforts." — *Thomas Arnold.* We cannot serve God in the grave.

"BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH." The last words of Malachi and of the Old Testament are a wonderful contrasted picture of gloom and joy, darkness and light, the everlasting doom of the wicked, the endless reward of the justified. "The Apocalypse of this last judgment is one of the grandest in all Scripture. To the wicked it shall be a terrible fire, root and branch shall they be burned out, but to the righteous a fair morning of God, as when dawn comes to those who have been sick and sleepless through the black night, and its beams bring healing, even as to the popular belief of Israel it was the rays of the morning sun which distilled the dew." — *George Adam Smith.*

The passage (Mal. 4) has one surpassingly lovely verse: "Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings." The allusion in "wings" may be directly to the sun's rays, or indirectly "to representations of the solar disk with wings issuing from either side, often found on Assyrian and Persian monuments." — *New Century Bible.* This beautiful figure of the light and warmth of the sun's rays and the physical healing that they bring has often been justly applied to Christ, the great Physician, and the healing that he brings to the sin-sick soul.

"'Malachi is like a late evening which brings a long day to a close, but he is also like a morning dawn which brings with it the promise of a new and more glorious day! And it is very significant that as in the New Testament Christ is heralded by the great forerunner who in all the circumstances of his life and story so closely recalled Elijah, and who evidently had in his mind the words of Malachi as well as of Isaiah (compare Matt. 3 : 11, 12; 11 : 3, 10, 14, with Mal. 3 : 2; 4 : 2); so Christ was attended on the Mount of Transfiguration by Moses and Elijah, and the law of Moses and the mission of Elijah are the two most prominent thoughts in the last of the prophets. The figure of the herald in the wilderness, of the great law-giver, of the mighty prophet, cast their dim shadows upon the page of Malachi; they shine forth in all their majesty in the pages of the Gospels under the splendor of the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in his wings." — *F. W. Farrar.*

"At the end of the Old Testament it is meet that the sun should break out. Evidently more was in store than Old Testament saints had dreamed; and the time was coming when the reign of type, symbol, and parable would be succeeded by the clear vision of the face of God. We live in the days of open vision. Let us go forth and exult." — *F. B. Meyer.*

FROM MALACHI TO JOHN THE BAPTIST. "Malachi has been called 'the Seal,' because his book closes the canon of the Old Testament." — *Farrar.* How little the Bible is merely a secular history is shown by the fact that four centuries intervene between the Old Testament and the New, four centuries unrecorded in Holy Writ because of their small significance in relation to the great story of salvation, which is the one theme of the Bible.

After the death of Nehemiah came the downfall of the Persian empire and the rise of Alexander the Great, who took possession of Jerusalem, and had sacrifices in his behalf offered to Jehovah. He carried away many Jews to his new city, Alexandria, in Egypt. Next the king of Egypt, Ptolemy Soter, took Jerusalem, carrying off to Alexandria and Cyrene 100,000 Jews, who prospered greatly in their new land. At this time the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek in Alexandria — the Septuagint.

After a century of Egyptian rule Palestine became a part of Syria under Antiochus III., king of Syria. The new rule was very harsh, the temple in Jerusalem was dedicated to Jupiter, and idolatrous altars were set up in every village.

Then the Jewish priest Mattathias led a successful rebellion, the national cause grew strong, and his son, Judas Maccabæus, defeated the Syrians in battle. His brothers Jonathan and Simon followed him in succession, themselves followed by John Hyrcanus. The Jews were once more the masters of their own land. The Books of the Maccabees, formerly bound in with the Bible, tell the story of these stirring events.

Quarrels in the ruling family, however, led to the interference of the Romans, and Pompey captured Jerusalem B. C. 63, Judæa being made a part of the Roman province of Syria. Herod the Great rose under the Romans, and entered Jerusalem in power. In his reign, B. C. 5, Jesus Christ was born, and New Testament history began. To that we turn our attention next quarter.

LESSON XIII (39). — September 24.

REVIEW. THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Jehovah hath done great things for us; Whereof we are glad.* — Ps. 126 : 3.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 66 : 1–5, 16–20.
Primary Topic : SELECTED STORIES RETOLD.
Memory Verse : Ps. 126 : 3.
Junior Topic : HOW GOD RESTORED HIS PEOPLE.
Memory Verse : Ps. 126 : 3.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : LEADERS IN THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL.
Topic for Young People and Adults : LESSONS FROM THE EXILE AND RETURN.

The teacher will select from the following review plans the one that is best suited to his class, or he may combine features of several forms of review. Methods are here given that are adapted to the different grades.

I. A TWO-COUNTRIES REVIEW.

This review, which is suited to classes of Intermediate and Senior age, will have for its basis an outline map of the lands of the exile, Babylonia and Persia, and of Palestine and Syria, with the region between. The teacher will prepare a set of questions on each lesson, bringing out the central facts and teachings, writing each question on a separate slip of paper. Pin the questions to the part of the map involved in the lesson, dividing the questions when the lesson involves Palestine as well as the country of the exile. The questions will be numbered in one series, and plainly marked with the numbers, so that the pupils will know to which region of the map to go for the next question. Pin the questions to the map, and have the pupils take turns in detaching the next question, reading it aloud, and answering it. If a question is not answered correctly, the pupil sitting next has a chance at it. Slips answered rightly are to be retained, and the pupil is counted victor that holds the largest number of slips at the end of the hour.

II. A PICTURE-HOUSE REVIEW.

Using the series of Lesson Pictures published by the publishers of this book, the W. A. Wilde Company, the teacher will base upon them an interesting review lesson for the Primary Class. Fasten uprights to chairs and tack laths across so as to outline a square enclosure fencing in the class. Mount each lesson picture on a very large sheet of pasteboard, and place hooks at the top of each sheet so that it can be hung from a lath. When all are in place, the class will be shut inside a little room of pictures, three on a side. You will not put up a picture until the class has answered satisfactorily your questions on the lesson which the picture illustrates. Thus the class will build for itself this picture house.

A SUMMARY REVIEW.

The older classes may be asked to prepare, for review Sunday, summaries of the more important features of the quarter's study, one summary being assigned to each student. The following themes may be suggested, the treatment in each case to draw from all the quarter's lessons, as far as they are applicable.

1. The Functions of the Prophet.
2. Literary Characteristics of the Books Studied This Quarter.
3. Providential Leadings in the Exile and Return.
4. Heroism Illustrated in This Quarter's Lessons.
5. Great Passages in the Scriptures of the Quarter.
6. Lessons for Our Day from the Exile and the Return.
7. The Significance of the Temple in Jewish History.
8. Disclosures of God in Our Quarter's History.
9. Lessons of the Quarter for Our Individual Lives.

IV. A RAINBOW REVIEW.

Our quarter's lessons have introduced us to seven great persons, each of whom lived and labored for the good of God's chosen people, the Jews. These seven are

Ezekiel, Daniel, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, and Malachi. For your review you may assign these seven characters to seven pupils, asking each to come prepared to tell the story of the hero or heroine assigned to him. For a fit symbol fasten to the blackboard or to a large sheet of pasteboard a picture of Jerusalem or of the temple and over it build up a rainbow, adding a new color as the heroes are described, until all seven colors are in position. Each color should be a different curved strip of cardboard, painted of the right hue,— violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red, red being on the outside. Print plainly on each strip the name of one of the seven characters. Explain that the rainbow symbolizes promise, and show how God's promises for his people were worked out, in part, through these seven lives.

V. A CHART REVIEW.

This review carries on the Chart Review of the last quarter, modified to suit the changed history. Each pupil will chart the quarter's lessons at home, taking a large sheet of manilla paper and drawing a straight line down the center. This line will represent the two centuries from the fall of Jerusalem to the death of Nehemiah. Divide the line into twenty sections, one for each decade (or forty sections, one for each half-decade). On the right of the line write or print the chief events in Jewish history during this time, underscoring the names of the Jewish leaders. On the left set forth the chief events of secular history, underscoring the names of kings. Use for all this the chronological tables in the front of this book. From these charts and his own the teacher will construct a model chart during the recitation period, asking questions as he proceeds and thus reviewing the quarter's lessons. If desired, the chart may be extended to cover the chief events up to the birth of Christ.

VI. A CHARACTER-STORY REVIEW.

To carry out this review, assign to each member of your class the task of writing a story based on some lesson of the quarter, telling the story in the first person, as if the writer were one of the characters of the lesson giving an account of the event. If you have fewer than twelve pupils, assign two lessons to some of them; if more than twelve, assign the same lesson to some, or have some of them write their stories in partnership. The following characters are suggested, but may be changed:

LESSON 1: Ezekiel himself writes the account.
LESSON 2: Written by one of Daniel's three friends.
LESSON 3: Written by one of the puzzled wise men.
LESSON 4: Written by the keeper of the lions.
LESSON 5: Written by a boy (or girl) in Zerubbabel's company.
LESSON 6: Written by an old man who saw Solomon's temple.
LESSON 7: Written by Mordecai.
LESSON 8: Written by Ezra himself.
LESSON 9: Written by King Artaxerxes.
LESSON 10: Written by Shallum, one of the workers on the wall.
LESSON 11: Written by a boy (or girl) who attended Ezra's Bible school.
LESSON 12: Written by a priest who heard Malachi's prophecy.

MOUNT QUARANTANIA, THE REPUTED PLACE OF JESUS' TEMPTATION.

Jesus the World's Saviour

Studies in Luke

FOURTH QUARTER.

OCTOBER 1—DECEMBER 31, 1922.

(FIRST HALF OF A SIX-MONTHS COURSE.)

LESSON I. — October 1.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. — Luke 1.

PRINT vs. 8–22.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink.* — LUKE 1 : 15.

Devotional Reading : Luke 1 : 68–79.
Reference Material : Isa. 40 : 3–5 ; Mal. 4 : 4–6.
Primary Topic : AN ANGEL BRINGS GOOD NEWS.
Lesson Material : Luke 1 : 5–23, 57–66, 80. Print vs. 8–22.
Memory Verse : He shall be great in the sight of the Lord. Luke 1 : 15.
Junior Topic : THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.
Memory Verses : Luke 1 : 76, 77.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST.
Topic for Young People and Adults : THE PLACE AND WORK OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in the story of the angel and his message about the coming of a baby to a childless home. Make the account vivid by the use of a pasteboard model of the temple and its courts and altars. Remove the roof to show the Holy Place where Zacharias offered incense.

The Intermediate Classes may be set to learning the most important events in the life of Christ in their chronological order. You may make a list of them in advance — there will be about seventy — or form the list as you go on. Our lesson includes : (1) the announcement to Zacharias ; (2) the announcement to Mary ; (3) the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth ; (4) the birth of John the Baptist. You may give each member of the class a ruler divided into thirty-five parts, marked from B. C. 5 to A. D. 30. Draw a vertical line down the center, and have the pupils print on one side the leading secular events and on the other the leading events of Christ's life. The reverse of the ruler will be divided into three parts and each of those parts into twelve divisions, for the insertion of the events (in their proper months) of the three years of Christ's public ministry.

The Older Classes will find this the best opportunity for a study of the heroic character of John the Baptist, with applications to the reform and evangelistic work needed to-day.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Annunciation to Zacharias, October, B. C. 6. Annunciation to Mary, March, B. C. 5. Visit of Mary to Elisabeth, perhaps May, B. C. 5. Birth of John the Baptist, June, B. C. 5.

Place. — Annunciation to Zacharias, at Jerusalem. Annunciation to Mary, at Nazareth. Birth of John, somewhere in the hill country of Judah.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The character of Zacharias.
Incense and prayer in the temple.
The character of John the Baptist.
The work of John the Baptist.
The nature and work of angels.
The present-day need of John the Baptists.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Birth of John the Baptist.

I. THE GOSPEL OF LUKE, vs. 1–4.
   Its author.
   Its characteristics.
   Its contents.

II. THE WONDERFUL PROMISE TO ZACHARIAS, vs. 5–17.
   The parents of John the Baptist.
   The coming of the angel.
   The angel's glorious announcement.

III. THE WONDERFUL PROMISE FULFILLED, vs. 18–80.
   The penalty of dumbness.
   The announcement to Mary.
   The visit to Elisabeth.
   The birth and youth of John the Baptist.
   Preparations for the coming of Christ.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Panels by Andrea Pisano (Florence). Panels in Siena Cathedral; others in the cathedral at Amiens. Frescoes by Giotto (Florence); by Lorenzo and Giacomo da San Severino (Urbino); by Masolino (Catiglione d'Olona); by Ghirlandajo (Florence); by Filippo Lippi (Prado); by Andrea del Sarto (Florence); by Andrea Sacchi (Rome).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Hayes's *The Most Beautiful Book Ever Written*. Commentaries on Luke by Farrar (*Cambridge Bible*), Adeney (*New Century Bible*), Bruce (*Expositor's Greek Testament*), Alford (*Greek Testament*), Parker (*People's Bible*), Burton (*Expositor's Bible*), Plummer (*International Critical Commentary*), Rice, Ellicott, Maclaren (*Expositions*), Bishop Jones (*Speaker's Commentary*), Cary (*International Handbooks to the New Testament*), Lindsay (*Handbooks for Bible Classes*), Weiss, Robinson, Dean Spence (*Pulpit Commentary*), Burgess, Campbell (*Critical Studies in Luke*), Maurice (*The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*), Abbott, Montefiore, etc. Meyer's *John the Baptist*. On Elisabeth in Adeney's *Women of the New Testament*. Stalker's *The Two Johns*.

I. **THE GOSPEL OF LUKE,** vs. 1–4. *The author of the third Gospel* was Luke, in the Greek Lucas, short for Lucanus. Luke was a friend and associate of Paul, a Greek physician who cared for the great apostle in his frequent sicknesses and his common feebleness. The only other person of the same name in the history of the times is the Roman poet Lucanus, whose epic poem, "Pharsalia," relates the struggle between Cæsar and Pompey. It is an interesting conjecture that this poet was named after the physician, who was thirty or forty years older, and corroborative evidence is the friendliness toward Paul shown by Gallio, the Roman proconsul in Corinth, an uncle of the poet Lucanus, and the traditional correspondence between Paul and the Roman philosopher Seneca, who was another uncle of the poet Lucanus.

Prof. D. A. Hayes, summing up what is known or may fairly be conjectured regarding Luke, concludes that "he was a slave boy in the household of Theophilus, a wealthy government official in Antioch. Theophilus educated the boy at his own expense at the best university in the land, that of Tarsus. Here he studied medicine, where the great masters in that profession, Aretæus, Dioscorides, and Athenæus, had been educated. Just a few miles away at Ægae stood the great temple of Æsculapius, which furnished the nearest approach to the modern hospital to be found in the ancient world. He made the acquaintance of Barnabas and Saul here.

"His education completed, he returned to Antioch and rendered faithful service in his master's family. Then the gospel was preached at Antioch, and Luke was among the first to accept it. Theophilus himself became interested and at last converted. About the first thing he did as a Christian was to give Luke his freedom.

"Luke the freedman shipped as a physician upon one of the vessels plying up and down the Mediterranean, and there he had manifold experiences. On one of his voyages he met some members of the family of Lucanus the poet, accompanied them to their home in Corduba in Spain, was there when the poet was born, and the baby boy was named after him. In this household he became acquainted with Gallio and Seneca and many other notable men.

"In due time he came back to Antioch and was there when one of the stirring events which he narrates in the history of the Christian Church (in Acts) took place. Later he removed to Troas, where Paul found him on his second missionary journey. He went with Paul to Philippi, and was left in charge of that church for seven years.

8. Now it came to pass, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

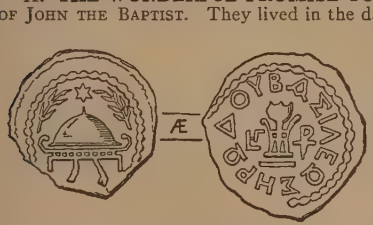
He left Philippi with Paul in A. D. 58, and remained with Paul until the apostle's martyrdom

"Some time after this event he wrote the third Gospel and the book of Acts for Theophilus, and he fully intended to write a third volume continuing the history, but he was swept away into the tide of Christian evangelism and never found leisure to do it. He labored as an evangelist in many lands, and in a ripe old age he fell on sleep and was buried somewhere in Greece."

Luke and Paul wrote more than half of the New Testament and Luke wrote a larger part of this than Paul. Luke was "a most versatile man — a physician, a musician, a painter, a poet, a preacher, a prolific author, an intrepid missionary — a man with many gifts and many friends and manifold accomplishments." — *Prof. D. A. Hayes.* Renan calls his Gospel "the most beautiful book ever written." It is the Gospel for the Gentiles — all the books of the New Testament except Luke's were written by Jews; it has worldwide breadth and outlook; it lays unique stress on evangelism, and on God's grace through Christ to all men. It is the longest Gospel, the most comprehensive. More miracles and parables are peculiar to this Gospel than to any other. Luke's Greek is the most beautiful in the New Testament, with the possible exception of the Epistle to the Hebrews. His Gospel is full of evidences that the writer was a physician,— not only many technical medical terms, but many observations that only a physician would make. This is pre-eminently the Gospel of childhood, the Gospel of womanhood, the Gospel for the poor and the outcasts. It is the most Pauline of the Gospels. It is the Gospel of song and praise. It is the Gospel that emphasizes the human side of the Saviour.

Luke's sources for his Gospel were many eyewitnesses of the scenes he describes and many listeners to Christ himself. Luke probably knew Mark, and availed himself of Mark's manuscript notes. During the two years of Paul's imprisonment in Cæsarea, Luke must have known Philip the evangelist and his daughters. He may have met Peter at Antioch and he surely met James and other church leaders in Jerusalem. Some think that Luke wrote his Gospel while Paul was in prison in Cæsarea. Others find indications in the Gospel that it was written in Luke's old age, after the death of Paul and after the destruction of Jerusalem. Indeed, Luke may have been gathering material and writing his Gospel, off and on, during all these years.

II. **THE WONDERFUL PROMISE TO ZACHARIAS,** vs. 5–17. The Parents of John the Baptist. They lived in the days of Herod the Great, king of Judæa, including not only the southern division of Palestine, but also Samaria, Galilee, and most of Peræa. He was not a Jew, but came from Idumea, the region south of Judæa, west of the Dead Sea. Of splendid physique, he was a vigorous ruler, but dissolute, violent, and passionate in his personal character. He cared nothing for religion, but did not interfere with the religion of the Jews, and even rebuilt their temple for them on a magnificent scale.



Coin of Herod the Great.

A helmet with cheek-pieces and above it a star, which is remarkable, as the birth of Christ was announced by a star.

Their names were Zacharias (written Zachariah in the Old Testament and meaning "remembered by Jehovah") and Elisabeth (written by us Elizabeth, and by the Jews also Elisheba, meaning "one whose oath is by God"). Zacharias was a priest and therefore descended from Aaron, and his wife also was a descendant of the great first high priest. They had no child, and both were well advanced in years.

The characters of this priest and his wife were of the noblest. Both in their inner life and their outward observances they were blameless, and they were strict to observe all of God's commandments written in the Old Testament and all of the ceremonial laws of the Jewish church. Many of the qualities of the heroic John the Baptist may be traced directly to his strict, honorable, and pious parents.

8. **While he executed the priest's office before God.** There were so many priests

9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the hour of incense.

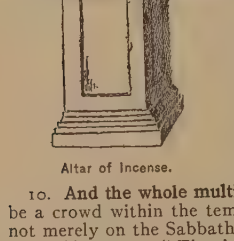
11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12. And Zăch-ă-rī'-ăs was troubled when he saw *him*, and fear fell upon him.

---

at this time — twenty thousand, according to tradition — that to serve in the Holy Place was allowed to any one priest only once in his life. This was therefore the day of all days to Zacharias, and the vision was to render it still more memorable. **In the order of his course.** The priests were divided into twenty-four courses, each of which was on duty, in its turn, for a week at a time. Zacharias belonged (verse 5) to the course of Abijah, the eighth of the courses.

9. **According to the custom of the priest's office.** The custom was that alluded to in what follows, that of casting lots to determine who should have the honor of burning the incense. **His lot was.** "Four lots were drawn to determine the order of the ministry of the day: the first, before daybreak, to designate the priests who were to cleanse the altar and prepare its fires; the second for the priest who was to offer the sacrifice and cleanse the candlestick and the altar of incense; the third for the priest who should burn incense; and the fourth appointing those who were to lay the sacrifice and meat-offering on the altar, and pour out the drink offering. In drawing the lot for the burning of incense, all were excluded who had previously performed that service, unless all present had so officiated." — *Prof. Marvin R. Vincent.* **To enter into the temple of the Lord.** That is, the Holy Place, the outer of the two divisions of the temple proper. "The golden altar of incense stood before the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Ex. 30 : 6). The priest entered in white robes and with unsandalled feet with two attendants who retired when they had made everything ready. The people waited outside in the Court of Israel praying in deep silence till the priest who was sacrificing the evening lamb at the great altar of burnt offering in the court gave a signal to his colleague in the Holy Place, perhaps by the tinkling of a bell (Ex. 30 : 1–10; Ps. 141 : 2; Mal. 1 : 11). He then threw the incense on the fire of the golden altar, and its fragrant smoke rose with the prayers of the people." — *F. W. Farrar.* **And burn incense.** A priest could have no higher duty than this to perform; for it was the symbol of the nation's prayer. King Uzziah became a leper when he usurped this high privilege. The incense offered was compounded according to a definite prescription of stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense, and the coals on which it was burned were brought in from the altar of burnt offering.



Altar of Incense.

10. **And the whole multitude of the people were praying without.** "There might be a crowd within the temple precincts at the hour of prayer any day of the week, not merely on the Sabbath or on a feast day." — *Expositor's Greek Testament.* **At the hour of incense.** "The time of day would be either about 9 A. M. or about 3 P. M., the time of the morning or of the evening sacrifice." — *Rev. Edwin W. Rice, D.D.*

11. **And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord.** "An account of John Hyrcanus the high priest having a vision at the time of offering incense occurs in Josephus (*Ant.* XIII. 10, 3). This is no vision, but an actual angelic appearance." — *Dean Alford.* **Standing on the right side of the altar of incense.** The right sids was regarded as the favorable side; thus the sheep are sent to the right and the goate to the left in Matt. 25 : 33. Minute points like this indicate that Luke's account came from Zacharias himself.

12. **And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.** Thus Manoah was struck with fear when the angel came to him (Judg. 13 : 22); so were Daniel and those with him (Dan. 10 : 7–9), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1 : 28), the women at the tomb of Christ (Mark 16 : 8), and John the apostle on Patmos (Rev. 1 : 17) when confronted with angelic presences.

13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zăch-ă-rī′-ăs: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God.

17. And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient *to walk* in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared *for him*.

---

13. **But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias.** "The first utterance of the Dawn of the Gospel. St. Luke begins with this angelic encouragement, and ends with the apostles 'blessing and praising God.'" — *F. W. Farrar.* **Because thy supplication is heard.** "The Greek noun used implies a special prayer, and the tense of the Greek verb shows that Zacharias had just been praying either to have a son, or at least that the days of the Messiah might come." — *Cambridge Bible.* **And thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son.** Not to have a child "was a heavy calamity in a Hebrew home. In the childless house there was no hope of the long-looked-for Messiah being born in it. It was not unfrequently looked on as a mark of the divine displeasure, possibly as the punishment of some grave sin." — *Dean Spence.* **And thou shalt call his name John.** "In calling the child John (Hebrew, Johanan, meaning 'to whom Jehovah is gracious,' or 'whom Jehovah has graciously given'), there would be a recognition of God's favor in removing from them the misfortune of childlessness and thereby giving them 'joy and gladness.'" — *President George L. Cary.*

14. **And thou shalt have joy and gladness.** Joy and exultation; joy great and still greater. "To the Hebrew heart the message, 'Unto you a son is born,' was the music of a lower gospel. It marked an epoch in their life-history; it brought the fulfilment of their desires, and a wealth of added dignities." — *Rev. Henry Burton, D.D.* **And many shall rejoice at his birth.** The wonder of his birth to an old couple would cause wide rejoicing when he was a babe, and when he grew to manhood he would be a blessing to the entire nation.

15. **For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.** A double meaning: great as God sees him, that is, *really* great; great in divine matters, in the sphere of religion. Truly a rich promise. **And he shall drink no wine nor strong drink.** The priests were forbidden to use strong drink, and the Nazirites still more strictly. "Thus John was to be like a Nazirite, but with two differences: (1) there is no reference to forbidding cutting the hair or shaving, as in the case of the Nazirite; (2) while the Nazirite's vow was for a definite period, the conclusion of which was marked by shaving, John's rule of life was to be perpetual, as was the case with Samson (Judg. 13 : 5) and Samuel (1 Sam. 1 : 11)." — *Prof. Walter F. Adeney.* **And he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.** Filled, not with wine, but with the Holy Spirit of God! and from his very birth! Compare Eph. 5 : 18; Acts 2 : 13–17.

16. **And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God.** The Jews had wandered far from God; the promised child would bring them back.

17. **And he shall go before his face.** Before God's presence, announcing the divine approach. **In the spirit and power of Elijah.** Thus after three centuries the prophecy of Mal. 3 : 1; 4 : 4–6 is taken up, and is applied by a supernatural being to the son of Zacharias. "No Jew who heard such tidings would soon lose them from his heart." — *Bishop Burgess.* "John's characteristic, like Elijah's, was power, not gentleness. If the earlier prophet had to beard Ahab and Jezebel, the second Elijah had Herod and Herodias. Both haunted the desert, both pealed out thunders of rebuke. Both shook the nation, and stirred conscience. No two figures in Scripture are sterner brethren in spirit than Elijah the Tishbite and John the Baptist." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.** To bring

18. And Zăch-ă-rī'-ăs said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring thee these good tidings.

20. And behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21. And the people were waiting for Zăch-ă-rī'-ăs, and they marvelled while he tarried in the temple.

22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: and he continued making signs unto them, and remained dumb.

---

together again disrupted families, or, perhaps, to cause the hearts of the fathers of Israel, now in heaven, to rejoice that their descendants have come back into the good old ways. **And the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just.** Their disobedience to God's laws had been the opposite of wisdom. **To make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.** The people would be prepared for the coming of the Messiah by the repentance and reformation just described.

III. **THE WONDERFUL PROMISE FULFILLED,** vs. 18–80. 18. **And Zacharias said unto the angel.** His voice must have been full of awe and yet have trembled in eagerness. **Whereby shall I know this?** "Hoo's I to ken this?" — *New Testament in Braid Scots.* **For I am an old man.** "The *Levites* (see Num. 4 : 3; 8 : 24, 25) became superannuated at the age of *fifty*; but this was not the case with the priests." — *Dean Alford.* **And my wife well stricken in years.** The same twofold doubt prevented Abraham's belief in a similar promise (Gen. 17 : 17).

19. **And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel.** "The Bible gives the names of two angels only: Gabriel ('the hero of God') and Michael ('who is like God?'). The former appears always to promote God's work on earth (Dan. 8 : 16; 9 : 21–23; Luke 1 : 26), to announce the restoration of Jerusalem, the birth of the Forerunner, the birth of Jesus. The latter appears to destroy all movements hostile to the kingdom of God (Dan. 10 : 13, 21; 12 : 1; Jude 9; Rev. 12 : 7). The one is the messenger of mercy, the other of wrath." — *Prof. Thomas M. Lindsay.* **That stand in the presence of God.** Only the most honored courtiers stand in Eastern courts, the rest kneeling or prostrating themselves. **And I was sent to speak unto thee.** "Specially sent to bring him this joyful news, and his words ought to have been a sufficient guarantee." — *Prof. Bernhard Weiss.* **And to bring thee these good tidings.** "Evangel" means "a good message," and "angel" means "messenger." "Gabriel is the angel evangelist, and this message is the gospel before Christ." — *Lindsay.*

20. **And behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak.** This dumbness was to be the evidence of the truth of the angel's words for which Zacharias had dared to ask. **Until the day that these things shall come to pass.** Until the birth of the promised son. **Because thou believedst not my words.** The dumbness was a punishment for Zacharias's doubts, but it was also a wonderful sign to Zacharias and must have acted to increase his faith. **Which shall be fulfilled in their season.** "It will be accomplished, for all that, in due time." — *Moffatt's Translation.*

21. **And the people were waiting for Zacharias.** The Greek implies protracted waiting. **And they marvelled while he tarried in the temple.** "It was customary for the priest at the time of prayer not to remain long in the Holy Place, for fear the people who were without might imagine that any vengeance had been inflicted on him for some informality, as he was considered the representative of the people." — *Alford.*

22. **And when he came out, he could not speak unto them.** "He ought to pronounce the benediction (Num. 6 : 24–26) from the steps, either alone or with other priests." — *International Critical Commentary.* **And they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple.** "His look and his inability to speak told them at once that something extraordinary had taken place; and the sacred circumstances would sug-

gest a supernatural appearance, even if his signs did not make this clear to them." — *Plummer*. **And he continued making signs unto them, and remained dumb.** He was also deaf, as appears from verse 62.

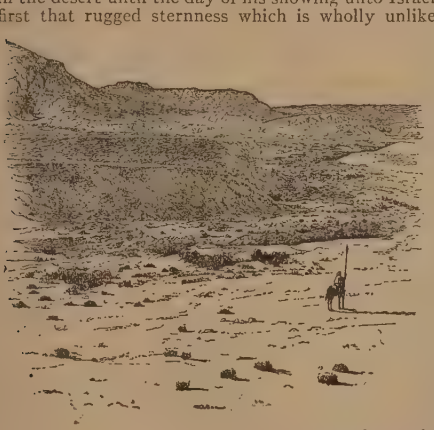
The Announcement to Mary. In regard to the first two chapters of Luke Dean Farrar wrote : " This very precious section of the Gospel contains many Hebraisms, and records facts not preserved by the other evangelists. It also enshrines hymns so beautiful as the *Magnificat*, the *Nunc Dimittis*, and the *Benedictus*, and therefore marks the earliest outburst of Christian hymnology ; and it alone preserves for us the angel's song, the *Gloria in Excelsis*. The section is marked by an idyllic beauty, and it has been conjectured that the details came to the evangelist, directly or indirectly, from the Virgin Mary herself."

In the sixth month after these events the same archangel Gabriel, in the upland village of Nazareth in Galilee, appeared to a maiden named Mary, who was betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph. To this maiden the angel brought the most wonderful news ever told a woman, that she should become the mother of the Son of God.

The Visit to Elisabeth. Mary received the announcement with lovely meekness and beautiful faith, and travelled speedily southward for about sixty miles to visit her kinswoman Elisabeth ; for the angel had told her of the wonder that had befallen her. The hymn of Mary, the *Magnificat*, named from the first words in the Latin translation, is a glorious anthem picturing the grace that would come to men through the Messiah. It is composed almost entirely of Old Testament quotations — especially from the Psalms and Isaiah.

The Birth and Youth of John the Baptist. When the aged and devout Elisabeth gave birth to a boy, there was great rejoicing among her neighbors and kinsfolk. This rejoicing was intensified when Zacharias recovered his speech at the naming of John eight days after his birth. His hymn of praise, similar to the *Magnificat*, is called the *Benedictus*, from its first word in the Latin translation.

Of the childhood of John we are told only that he " waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert until the day of his showing unto Israel." He probably showed from the first that rugged sternness which is wholly unlike the winning grace of the child Christ." — *Farrar*. " Probably Zacharias died when John was quite young, and Elisabeth also. But John was able to care for himself. A lone man, he passed forth into the great and terrible wilderness of Judæa, which is so desolate that the Jews call it the abomination of desolation." — *F. B. Meyer*. There John supported himself by eating locusts and wild honey, while a cave was his sufficient shelter. In that wild solitude he had ample time to plan the great work he was to do.



From a photograph

The Wilderness of Judaea.

Preparations for the Coming of Christ. " The Baptist's was a predestined life. It was to emphasize this fact that the element of miracle was allowed to enter so largely into the circumstances of his birth. Yet perhaps the chief lesson which we have to learn from the miracle is not that the birth of John was exceptional, but rather that every birth is more wonderful than we are apt to suppose.

" There are good people in the worst of times. It was an evil time. The people of God had sunk very low both in character and fortune. It was the darkest hour, which occurs just before the dawning. The nation was enslaved to the Roman power ; and its own princes, of dubious origin, were the exact reverse of the ideals of the nation's prime. The Pharisee and the Sadducee occupied the high places of religion — the one as scribe, ruling in the synagogue, the other as priest, ruling in the temple,

The publican, the sinner, and the harlot flaunted their vices in the eyes of all." — *James Stalker.*

Yet everywhere through the land were scattered God's saints — Elisabeths, Zachariases, Josephs, Marys, Simeons, Annas — keeping in their hearts the fires of true religion and intense patriotism. They loved the Bible. They believed its promises. They looked ardently for the Messiah foretold by the ancient prophets. Thus the Holy Spirit of God was still brooding over his people, preserving a remnant of faith and hope; and the flowering of all this was the life of John the Baptist, the strong forerunner of the Son of God.

"Herald of Christ, the day is come,
Day by prophetic lips foretold,
When from the shadow of the tomb
The page of life shall be unrolled:
The daylight dawns; the bright beams glow:
First witness of that light art thou."
—*Gerald Moultrie.*

LESSON II. — October 8.

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS. — Luke 2.

PRINT vs. 40–52.

GOLDEN TEXT.— ***And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*** — LUKE 2 : 52.

Devotional Reading : Isa. 9 : 1–7.
Reference Material : Matt. 1 : 18—2 : 23.
Primary Topic : THE BOY JESUS.
Lesson Material : Luke 2 : 40–52.
Memory Verse : And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom. Luke 2 : 40.
Junior Topic : THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.
Lesson Material : Luke 2 : 40–52.
Memory Verse : Luke 2 : 40.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : JESUS AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL.
Topic for Young People and Adults : THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF THE YOUNG.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may be told the entire story of the birth of Jesus, the events in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Egypt, the upbringing at Nazareth, and the visit to Jerusalem. Get the children to repeat the story to you afterwards, in order.

The Intermediate Classes will add about seven events to the list recorded on the "time sticks" started last week.

The Older Classes will find that this lesson affords a fine opportunity to discuss the religious education of the young: where it should be conducted, who should conduct it, how it should be conducted, and what results should be sought.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Calculations were not made from the birth of Christ till centuries after he was born, and then a mistake of four years was made by the monk Dionysius Exiguus (A. D. 526). Therefore Jesus was born toward the end (we say on December 25) of B. C. 5. Therefore he was twelve years old in A. D. 8 and his first passover was in April of that year.

Place. — Jerusalem, the boy Jesus in the temple.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The Roman, Jewish, and Christian calendars.
The reign of Herod the Great.
Ancient census customs.
Bethlehem to-day.
Nazareth to-day.
Christ's birth and prophecy.
The education of Jesus as a model for to-day.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Jesus at Home and at School.

I. THE STORY OF THE WONDERFUL BIRTH, vs. 1–39.
From Nazareth to Bethlehem.
No room in the inn.
The angel's message.
The angelic chorus.
The testimony of Simeon.
The testimony of Anna.
The visit of the Magi.
The flight to Egypt.

II. The Boyhood of Jesus, vs. 40–52.
Strength, widsom, grace.
The journey to Jerusalem.
In the temple.
"How is it that ye sought me?"
Subject to his parents.
Favor with God and men.
The religious training of the young.

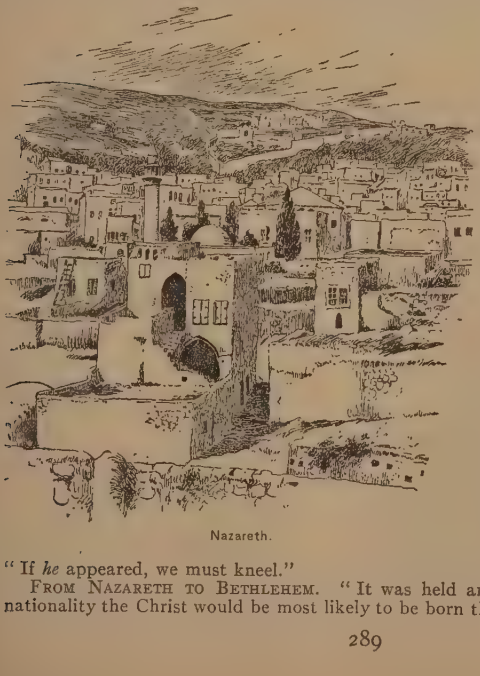
THE LESSON IN ART.

Uncounted Madonnas by the master painters of the world. Annunciations by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Van der Weyden, Francia, etc. "The Arrival at Bethlehem," by Merson. The shepherds, by Le Rolle, Murillo, Plockhorst, etc. "The Holy Night," by Correggio. "The Presentation in the Temple," by De Champaigne. "The Star of Bethlehem," by Burne-Jones, Schonherr, and Pigheim. "The Adoration of the Wise Men," by Velasquez, Rubens, Bouguereau. "The Holy Family Resting on the Way to Egypt," by Van Dyck, Merson, Benz, and Le Rolle. "The Return of the Holy Family to Nazareth," by Dobson. "The Triumph of the Innocents" and "The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple," by Holman Hunt. "Jesus among the Doctors," by Hofmann.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Seven chapters in Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible.* David Smith's *The Days of His Flesh.* Garvie's *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus.* *A People's Life of Christ*, by Paterson-Smyth. *The Life of Christ* by Lees. Margaret E. Sangster's *That Sweet Story of Old.* E. S. Phelps Ward's *The Story of Jesus Christ.* Davis's *The Story of the Nazarene.* Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.* Adeney's *Women of the New Testament.* Farrar's *Life of Christ.* Dunning's *To-day in Palestine.* Paxton Hood's *Villages of the Bible.* W. A. Knight's *No Room in the Inn.* Henry van Dyke's *The Sad Shepherd, The Lost Boy,* and *Childhood of Jesus Christ.* Trumbull's *Hints on Child Training.* Cope's *Religious Education in the Family.* Coe's *Education in Religion and Morals.* Hubbell's *Up through Childhood.* Hartshorne's *Childhood and Character.* Heathcote's *Essentials of Religious Education.* Orr's *The Virgin Birth of Christ.* Knight's *On the Way to Bethlehem.* Leary's *The Christmas City.*

I. **THE STORY OF THE WONDERFUL BIRTH,** vs. 1–39. "The life of Jesus Christ must ever remain the noblest and most fruitful study for all men, of every age." — *Cunningham Geikie.* "Men of all races, regardless of religion, will frankly confess that Jesus of Nazareth is the most wonderful character the world has ever known; that he stands peerless for wholesome examples and righteous influences in all the many walks of life; that no character has ever equalled him, among the learned in wisdom, among the charitable in kindness, among the sympathetic in joys or sorrows." — *Rev. W. H. Nelson, D. D.* "Search diligently and you will find Christ as the head of the best thought, the purest desire, the noblest resolve for the betterment of the race! Cast in your lot with that and you are following him." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.* No one can go far in the contemplation of this wonderful human life without discovering that it passes the bounds of humanity, that one stands in the very presence of God.



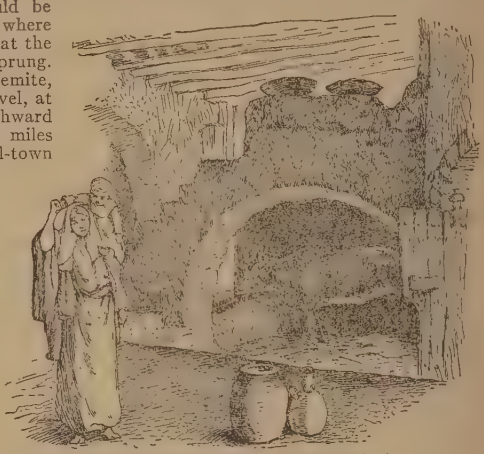
Nazareth.

Illustration. Charles Lamb was talking gaily with some friends, discussing how they should feel if this or that great man should enter the room from the land of spirits — "What if Shakespeare came?" "We should all rise," he answered. "And if Christ entered this room?" Lamb's manner changed at once, and he said, greatly moved, "If *he* appeared, we must kneel."

From Nazareth to Bethlehem. "It was held among the people into whose nationality the Christ would be most likely to be born that there was especial purity

in the virgin life. It was held by them that through a virgin descended from a royal line such a one would come into the world. It might be expected that God, suiting his methods to the ideas of the time so that he might the better be understood, would have some regard for these ineffaceable beliefs of the nation foremost in its moral convictions and expectations. Virgin birth and royal descent were among these requirements, but there was equal need that the birth should be among men of lowly estate, on the plane where the toiling millions do their work." — *Rev. D. W. Faunce, D.D.* All these conditions were wonderfully met in Mary, descended from King David (and thus from Ruth the Moabitess), a maiden of the obscure village of Nazareth, betrothed to the village carpenter, Joseph, who also was of the family of David.

Augustus, Emperor of Rome, called for a census of his vast realm, to serve as the basis for taxation — a most unpopular proceeding. It was the ancient Jewish rule that the census should be taken of each family not where they lived at the time, but at the place whence their family sprung. Since David was a Bethlehemite, Joseph and Mary must travel, at the beck of Augustus, southward nearly a hundred toilsome miles to the ancient and royal hill-town of Bethlehem in Judah.



A Peasant's Home with its Manger, in Palestine.

NO ROOM IN THE INN. Rejected by the crowded inn, forced to take shelter in a rocky grotto used by the inn as a stable, Mary there brought forth her son, herself wrapping him in swaddling bands and laying him tenderly in the rude manger. The very grotto is shown in Bethlehem, pointed out by a most plausible tradition that comes down from Justin Martyr, who was himself born in Palestine and lived less than a century after Christ. Jerome, the great translator of the Bible into Latin, lived in this cave.

Illustration. "I have never felt the full pathos of the scene till, standing one day in a room of an old inn in the market-town of Eisleben, in Central Germany, I was told that on that very spot, four centuries ago, amidst the noise of a market-day and the bustle of a public-house, the wife of the poor miner, Hans Luther, who happened to be there on business, being surprised like Mary with sudden distress, brought forth in sorrow and poverty the child who was to become Martin Luther, the hero of the Reformation and the maker of modern Europe." — *Prof. James Stalker, D.D.*

The poem, "The Inn That Missed Its Chance," by Amos R. Wells, represents the landlord of the Bethlehem inn regretting, when Christ was at the height of his popularity, that the birth of the Messiah had not taken place at his inn :

> "There was a sign, they say, a heavenly light
> Resplendent ; but I had no time for stars.
> And there were songs of angels in the air
> Out on the hills ; but how was I to hear
> Amid the thousand clamors of an inn ? "

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE. "At the season of our Saviour's advent (whichever date shall be selected) the nights were soft and genial. It was no hardship for rugged shepherds to spend the night in the fields with their flocks." — *Henry Ward Beecher.* To such a group, watching their sleeping sheep in a field near Bethlehem, came a sudden splendid light, in the midst of which shone an angel. He brought the "good tidings of great joy," the news of the Messiah's birth. "Meet was it that, when

annunciation was to be made of the birth of the Shepherd of souls, it should be made not to king in palace or high priest in temple, but to shepherds abiding in the field."—*Rev. George Dana Boardman, D.D.*

G. Bagioli.

The Birth of Jesus.

This great painting hangs in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the place where Jesus is believed to have been born.

The Angelic Chorus. "It was appropriate that the Christ-child should have come with a burst of song. When the earth began, which was to be the scene of his redemption, 'the morning stars sang together.' For ages inspired poets sang in anticipation of his birth. The last thing that Jesus and his disciples did together was to sing a song before going out from the upper chamber where they celebrated the last supper. Wherever the gospel has gone, it has been wafted on the wings of song." — *Rev. William E. Barton, D.D.* This song, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, has come to us, in the ancient texts, in two forms: a three-line refrain,—

> Glory to God in the highest (highest heaven),
> And on earth peace (between man and man),
> Good will (of God) among men;

or a two-line refrain,—

> Glory to God in the highest,
> And on earth peace among men, in whom he (God) is well pleased.

The two translations differ in form more than in thought.

The Testimony of Simeon. The rite of circumcision, the seal of the covenant given to Abraham two thousand years before, was performed on the eighth day after Christ's birth, and the child was named Joshua (Greek, "Jesus"), meaning "Jehovah is salvation," as the angel had directed (Luke 1 : 31), because he was to save people from their sins. On the fortieth day, according to the law (Lev. 12 : 2–6), the babe was taken to the temple by Mary. A lamb was required for sacrifice on this occasion, but the poor might bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons, and Mary took advantage of this provision. It was on this occasion that the devout Simeon, eagerly expecting the promised Messiah, received a divine intimation that the babe brought by this obscure couple was the long-looked-for Redeemer. Taking the child in his arms, he blessed God and spoke the *Nunc Dimittis*, a psalm which early entered into the evening worship of the Christian church.

The Testimony of Anna. The same occasion was rendered notable also by the witness of Anna, a widow reckoned to have been one hundred and five years old at this time. She had spent the eighty-four years of her widowhood as far as possible in the temple, solacing herself with prayer, and pleading with God to send redemption to her people. "Is it too much to suggest that Gabriel's visit to Mary was in response to Anna's prayer?" — *Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D.* Anna was a prophetess, and when she saw Mary with Jesus she gave thanks to God, and testified to her friends that her lifetime of prayer had now been answered.

The Visit of the Magi. After the presentation in the temple still other witnesses testified to the wonderful Babe, no less than three sages from the far east, probably from Persia. They had seen a new star rising in the eastern sky, the phenomenon being perhaps emphasized by a remarkable conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn which took place at that time. They had gone first to Jerusalem to seek the new "king of the Jews," and had been directed to Bethlehem by Herod, mindful of

40. And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon him.

41. And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.

42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast ;

---

the prophecy in Mic. 5 : 2. There they found the Divine Child, presented their gifts of gold for the king, myrrh for his resurrection, and frankincense in token of prayer to God, and then avoided the plotting Herod by returning home without visiting Jerusalem.

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT. Herod's massacre of all the male babies in Bethlehem two years old or under was in complete harmony with the cruel and abominable character of that ruler misnamed "the Great." The Holy Family escaped by going to the nearest safe refuge outside of Herod's domains, three hundred miles southwest to Egypt, and remaining there a few weeks until Herod's death about April 1. Then they returned to Nazareth, Hos. 11 : 1 having been wonderfully fulfilled, "Out of Egypt did I call my son."

II. **THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS,** vs. 40–52. "Jesus became a child, as Irenæus beautifully observes, that he might be the Saviour of children. He has sanctified childhood, as he has every other age and experience of humanity, by passing through it. And the light and sanctity of this divine childhood still linger around every human child." — *Hastings.*

> "And since the child of Nazareth
> Set on it thus his seal and sign,
> Who — till man's sin hath marred it — saith
> That childhood is not still divine!"

40. **And the child grew.** It is hard to see how Deity can grow, but no harder than to see how Deity can incarnate himself in a human life. If we grant that great, fundamental fact, we see how the Saviour must have been subject to all human laws, among them those of growth. **And waxed strong.** Jesus developed *physically.* This is the first step in growth for all children. If their physical growth is arrested, their mental growth is likely to be arrested also; the brain seems to be aroused by the muscles. **Filled with wisdom.** Jesus developed *mentally.* The body ceases to grow in time, but the mind never ceases to grow. "When he was about six years old he would go to the synagogue school of the town, taught by the country rabbi. The Jews of that day set high importance on the school. It was unlawful to live where there was no school for the children. Up to ten years of age the Bible formed the text-book." — *J. Paterson-Smyth, D.C.L.* **And the grace of God was upon him.** Jesus developed *spiritually.* The love of God was in his heart and suffusing his life. Growth in body and mind are as nothing without this.

41. **And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.** Joseph, like every other male Israelite, was obliged to go (Ex. 23 : 17), but Mary was not under that obligation.

42. **And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast.** "Among the later Jews, it was customary for the males to commence their attendance at the three great festivals and their regular observance of ceremonial law at this age, at which they were called 'sons of the law.' This journey, then, of our Saviour with his parents to Jerusalem was no casual event : it was a very solemn occasion, regarded by them and by him as marking a critical epoch in his life. We can thus understand why this incident has been singled out from a long period of thirty years, and alone put on record." — *Speaker's Commentary.*

"It is scarcely possible to realize the eagerness Jesus would feel in the anticipation of the visit. The Holy City was the center around which revolved all the patriotism of the Jewish race. It was instinct with the glory of Jewish history. . . . The Temple of God, a glorious edifice, stood on the precipitous hill overlooking the Kedron Valley. Its lofty towers could be seen by the Galilean pilgrims as they descended the last slope to the shady avenues through the delightful gardens on the north of the city." — *Rev. G. Robinson Lees.*

43. **And when they had fulfilled the days.** "The feast of unleavened bread lasted seven days. This and the passover were observed at the same time. The

43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and his parents knew it not ;

44. But supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey ; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance :

45. And when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.

46. And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions :

47. And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

---

passover was on the fourteenth day of the first month (Nisan, our March-April), and on the fifteenth the seven days' feast of unleavened bread began, so the whole service would require eight days." — *Rev. E. W. Rice, D.D.* Attendance in the temple, however, was required only on the first two days of the Feast of Passover, after which any one that wished was at liberty to return home. **As they were returning.** "It is probable that the vast caravan of Galilean pilgrims on their way from the feast would go by the most direct and least dangerous route, which lay through the old tribal territories of Ephraim and Manasseh." — *F. W. Farrar.* **The boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem.** In the East boys mature much faster than in our colder climes, and Jesus at the age of twelve was doubtless left much to himself during the feast. **And his parents knew it not.** Henry van Dyke, in his beautiful story, *The Lost Boy*, imagines that Jesus had risen before dawn and had climbed to the top of Olivet to watch the sunrise and be alone with his Father in heaven ; and when he returned he found his family and neighbors all gone.

44. **But supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey.** Joseph and Mary were traveling with relatives and friends, and thought that Jesus was with some of these. **And they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.** We see that the boy Jesus was of a sociable nature, mingling freely with a large circle of young and old, and gladly trusted to do so.

45. **And when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.** They had gone a day's journey, which "is now commonly reckoned at about three miles per hour, the distance usually covered by a loaded mule, the number of hours being about eight. Hence a day's journey is about twenty-four miles, and this may be taken as a fair estimate for Bible times." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.*

46. **And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple.** The three days probably include the day's journey northward, the day's journey back, and one day's search in Jerusalem. **Sitting in the midst of the teachers.** The Feast of the Passover must have still been in progress, "for Jesus could not have been found among the Doctors after the close of the Feast. The members of the Temple Sanhedrin, who on ordinary days sat as a court of appeal from the close of the morning to the time of the evening sacrifice, were wont on Sabbaths and *feast days* to come out upon 'the Terrace' of the temple, and there to teach." — *Edersheim.* The audience sat on the ground around the doctors. **Both hearing them, and asking them questions.** The instruction given on such occasions was of the most popular nature, and the greatest freedom of questioning was allowed. Very likely the discussion had turned upon the meaning of the passover, and perhaps the questions of the boy Jesus were such as to lead up in his own mind to the supreme Passover sacrifice which he himself was to make for the sins of the world.

47. **And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.** "Among the Doctors of the Jewish University who were amazed and confounded at the erudition and spirituality of the boy Jesus, we reckon Annas, lately appointed high priest ; and Caiaphas, his future judges ; also the aged Hillel, the Glory of the Law, founder of the Liberal School ; and Simeon his son and successor, afterwards president of the Sanhedrin, possibly he who had blessed the babe Jesus and pronounced the *Nunc Dimittis.* Gamaliel, the son of Simeon, the famous third head of the School and teacher of Saul of Tarsus, at this time a young man, was perhaps

48. And when they saw him, they were astonished ; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.

49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me ? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house ?

50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth ; and he was subject unto them : and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

---

an amazed listener ; and Philo of Alexandria, the famous Hellenizer, then likewise a young man, was possibly present." — *Prof. Noah K. Davis, Ph.D.*

48. **And when they saw him, they were astonished.** " That Mary's thoughts were not at once directed to the temple is a striking illustration of the absence of unusual professions or pretensions in our Lord's ordinary conduct. His parents seem to have expected him throughout to do as other children did, and to be found where other children were." — *Hastings.* **And his mother said unto him.** She was closest to Jesus, and could not have forgotten the angel's prophecy before the birth of her son. **Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ?** " Just what any mother would say when, after days of anxiety, seeking a strayed child and imagining all sorts of terrible possibilities, she suddenly comes on him safe and happy and evidently quite unconscious of her and her anxiety. Like many another mother she failed to enter into the mysterious thoughts stirring in the heart of her child." — *J. Paterson-Smyth.* **Behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.** Joseph was evidently a man of few words, and Mary did his talking for him ; but he was not behind Mary in searching for the lad and grieving after him.

49. **And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me ?** " Why did you look for me ? " — *Moffatt's Translation.* " He looked at her with perfect self-possession. Nay, truly, the right of reproach seemed, strangely, to rest with him." — *Elizabeth Stuart Phelps.* **Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house ?** There is no noun in the Greek, which is simply " at my Father's." It may mean, " at my Father's house " or " at my Father's work — about my Father's business." As Mary's words had been about her search, " in my Father's house " would be the most likely translation ; but both translations mean absorption in the great work which God, his Father, had sent him to do. " These first recorded words of Jesus are the kernel of the whole narrative, and the cause of its having been preserved." — *International Critical Commentary.* They gently correct Mary's word about his earthly father, Joseph, and remind her that his real Father is God. " He thought of, trusted in, loved, and served God as Father. He was sure of God's love, care, bounty, guidance, guardianship, authority, and approval." — *Principal Alfred E. Garvie.* This disclosure of God as a Father was one of the chief revelations made by Jesus to the world.

50. **And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.** " It was for them the parting of the ways. Their child had heard the first boom of the waves that were to bear him far, far out of their sight." — *Margaret E. Sangster.*

51. **And he went down with them.** As Jerusalem is situated on a high ridge 2,500 feet above the Mediterranean, the traveler from it to any other city or town in Palestine must go *down*. **And came unto Nazareth,** " the most honored of all the villages of the Bible, an upland vale among the hills of Galilee, a basin lost in the hollow of about fifteen hills. There is a hill over Nazareth where the eye becomes aware of the whole enchanting scene ; there is the magnificent plain of Esdraelon, the battlefield of the Bible ; there is the round top of Hebron, and there is Tabor, and there are the blood-stained and dewless heights of Gilboa ; and there on the opposite scene are the mountains of Samaria, and there is Carmel towering in height, looking towards the sea ; and there the Mediterranean glows and gleams in the light, and Kishon, that ancient river, sweeps away through the narrow valley on the other side ; and onward, seas of hills rise over all, and majestic Hermon with its icy crown. Such was the scene on which beyond a doubt the young boy Jesus often climbed to gaze." — *Rev. Paxton Hood.* " Modern Nazareth is a rather large city, boasting a population of some twelve thousand. The Christians are in the majority. Nazareth is a great center for schools and orphan asy-

52. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

From a photograph.
A Carpenter's Shop in Nazareth.

lums. There are no saloons." — *H. W. Dunning, Ph.D.* **And he was subject unto them.** "That is all that is told us about eighteen years, by far the largest part of the earthly life of Christ. Legend tells us, what is probably quite true, that during these years Jesus worked in the carpenter's shop, and as one story says, made yokes, or as another tells, made light implements of husbandry for the peasants around Nazareth. He was 'about the Father's business' quite as much as when he was amongst the doctors. The commonest duty may be 'the Father's business' if we remember him in the doing of it." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **And his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.** Rev. William Wye Smith, in his *New Testament in Braid Scots*, has this tender note here: "What coud Mary's thochts be, a' thae years. She aiblins didna come to the fu' licht till aboot the time o' his death. And hoo did Luke ken sae mickle aboot her ponderins o' heart? Nae doot, frae hersel, in eftir days."

Illustration. The tender scene at the cross when Jesus gave his mother in charge of John shows us something of the love between the two. "'The happiest part of my happy life,' said Phillips Brooks, 'has been my mother.' When on his visit to England he was commanded to preach before Queen Victoria, some one asked him if he felt at all afraid. 'No,' he replied, smiling, 'I have preached before my mother.'" — *J. Gregory.*

52. **And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature.** The lad's training was largely in the Bible. "When a Jewish boy was three years old he was given the tasselled garment directed by the Law (Num. 15 : 38-41; Deut. 22 : 12). At five he usually began to learn portions of the Law, under his mother's direction; these were passages written on scrolls, such as the *shema* or creed of Deuteronomy 6 : 4, the Hallel Psalms (Ps. 114, 118, 136). When the boy was thirteen years old he wore, for the first time, the phylacteries, which the Jews always put on at the recital of the daily prayer. In the well-known and most ancient 'Maxims of the Fathers' we read that, at the age of ten, a boy was to commence the study of the Mishna (a compilation of traditional interpretations of the Law); at eighteen he was to be instructed in the Gemara (a vast collection of interpretations of the Mishna. The Mishna and Gemara together make up the Talmud. The Mishna may roughly be termed the text, the Gemara the commentary, of the Talmud.)" — *Dean Spence.* **And in favor with God and men.** "For eighteen years he toiled with hammer and saw, knowing all the while who he was and wherefore he had come, yet hiding the wondrous secret in his breast and never, until his hour arrived, revealing it by word or sign. Nor were those silent years lost. They served in the providence of God as a preparation for the work which had been given him to do. All the while he would be brooding over those sacred Scriptures which spake of him, foretelling his advent and prefiguring his redemption. And he would be looking abroad, with keen eye and sympathetic heart, upon the world which he had come to save." — *Rev. David Smith.*

THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF THE YOUNG. "The aim and goal of education and religion are virtually the same. The basis of true education is religion, and any effort to make education independent of religion narrows its scope, aim, and goal." — *Charles W. Heathcote, S.T.D.* This is because both education and religion seek to develop the whole personality, and this is best done through following Jesus Christ.

"There are no absolutely perfect children in this world. All of them need restraining in some things and stimulating in others. And every imperfect child can be helped toward a symmetrical character by wise Christian teaching. Every house should be an institution for the treatment of imperfectly developed children. Every father and every mother should be a skilled physician in charge of such an institution." — *Henry Clay Trumbull.* Every Sunday school should help the home mightily to this great end. The duty and privilege of child-training rest on every Christian.

The aims of religious education reach out beyond the individual child to the progress and welfare of human society. The following two sentences are a fine summary: "The goal of religious education for the individual is the completely socialized will, expressed in a life that is sharing increasingly in the knowledge and work of an eternal society, and in the joy of human and divine companionship — in a word, world citizenship. The goal of religious education for society is the reorganization of institutions and enterprises in such a way as to provide for all individuals the stimulus of the religious heritage of the race, and equal opportunities for health, education, work, play, and worship — in a word, world-brotherhood." — *Prof. Hugh Hartshorne.* This is the life of love to God and man which Christ came to establish on earth.

Religious education includes, of course, the study of the Bible and the inculcation of the principles of religion, but this may go no deeper than the mind. Religious education is far more than that; it "means the training of persons to live the religious life and to do their work in the world as religious persons. It must mean, then, the development of character; it includes the aim to bring children up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." — *Rev. Henry F. Cope, D.D.*

"It must be said that the Sunday-school teacher has little time in which to touch and shape for eternity the character of the child. 'Only thirty minutes,' you say, 'only thirty minutes to mold a soul for eternity?' Yes, only thirty minutes, but it is thirty minutes of opportunity. The child comes to the teacher expecting to be instructed in divine things, ready for an appeal to mind and heart and conscience, expecting to learn true and strong and worthy things." — *President George A. Hubbell, Ph.D.*

"An essential condition of success in all religious teaching is that the teacher should be alive, and should impart his life to his pupil. The best teacher is one in whom the pupil feels the presence of religion as a concrete, natural, and attractive thing. Nothing in the way of methods or devices can take the place of wholesome, winning personality." — *Prof. George A. Coe.*

Above all, the religious teacher must himself be taught of the Divine Teacher, and must have the constant aid of his Holy Spirit. This is the greatest of all work and needs the greatest of all resources. It may be accomplished, but only in His wisdom and strength.

LESSON III. — October 15.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. — Luke 3.

PRINT vs. 7–17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*— MATT. 3 : 2.

Devotional Reading : Isa. 40 : 1–11.
Reference Material : Matt. 11 : 2–19; Phil. 2 : 5–11.
Primary Topic : WHAT JOHN SAID ABOUT JESUS.
Lesson Material : Luke 3 : 1–18. Print vs. 7–17.
Memory Verse : There cometh he that is mightier than I. Luke 3 : 16.
Junior Topic : JOHN PREACHING AND BAPTIZING.
Lesson Material : Luke 3 : 1–22. Print vs. 7–17.
Memory Verse : Luke 3 : 3.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : A FEARLESS REFORMER.
Topic for Young People and Adults : REPENTANCE : WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT DOES.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will be interested in an account of the wilderness in which John preached and the kind of life he led there. They will be told what John said about Jesus, and will be shown how even a child can point others to Jesus and help them to follow him.

The Intermediate Classes will add three events to their "time sticks," — the preaching of John, the baptism of Jesus, and the imprisonment of John. The geological features of the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea will be of interest to them. Emphasize John's teaching about repentance, and show how they can prove that they are sorry for various kinds of wrongdoing.

The Older Classes will study the work of John in its prophetic character, what he did to prepare the way for Jesus; and will apply it to the needs of the present time for heralding the cross and preaching the gospel. What is the Christian message regarding sin, and how does it enlarge John's message?

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — John began to preach in the summer of A. D. 26. The baptism of Jesus took place in January, A. D. 27.

Place. — John preached in the wilderness of Judæa, west and north of the Dead Sea. Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan, at some ford in the southern portion.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

The characters of the rulers in the time of Christ.
John the Baptist compared with Elijah and Isaiah.
The wilderness of Judæa.
John's preaching as a social creed.
John's preaching applied to individuals.
The divine witness to Jesus.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Work of a Fearless Reformer.

I. The Need of Repentance, vs. 1–9.
- The voice in the wilderness.
- The call to repentance.
- The fate of the unrepentant.

II. The Fruits of Rpentance, vs. 10–14.
- The fruit of kindness.
- The fruit of justice.
- The fruit of mercy.
- The fruit of contentment.
- Other fruits of repentance.

III. The Baptism of the Spirit, vs. 15–38.
- The prophecy of the Christ.
- The Great Reformer.
- The witness of the Spirit.
- In Herod's prison.
- We should be reformers.

THE LESSON IN ART.

John the Baptist Preaching, by Ghirlandajo (Florence), Filippo Lippi, Andrea del Sarto (Florence), and Rembrandt. The Baptism of Jesus, by Ghirlandajo, Verocchio, Perugino, Francia, Roger Van der Weyden, Tintoretto, Fra Angelico, Veronese, F. V. Du Mond, and many others.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Farrar's *Texts Explained*. John the Baptist in Hastings's *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*. Maurice's *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*. Kingsley's *All Saints' Day*. Mary Stewart's *A King among Men*. Hodges's *The Year of Grace, Advent to Trinity*. MacGregor's *Into His Likeness*. Article on "Taxes" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible*.

I. THE NEED OF REPENTANCE, vs. 1–9. The Voice in the Wilderness. The Roman emperor Augustus, in whose reign Jesus was born, was succeeded by his stepson, Tiberius Cæsar, a bloody tyrant and a wretched sensualist. The beginning of John's ministry was in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, counting from the time when Tiberius became associated with Augustus in the government, A. D. 11.

Herod the Great died soon after Christ's birth. At the time when John the Baptist began to preach the son of Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, was "tetrarch" ("ruler of one-fourth of a kingdom") of Galilee and of the part of Peræa (the country east of the Jordan) lying south of the Sea of Galilee. Christ called him "*that fox*" — the only word of absolute contempt in all his sayings.

At the same time Herod Philip, half-brother of Herod Antipas, being son of Herod the Great by another wife, was tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, the region north and east of the Sea of Galilee. He was the best of the Herods. He beautified the city of Cæsarea Philippi, north of the Sea of Galilee, which was named for him.

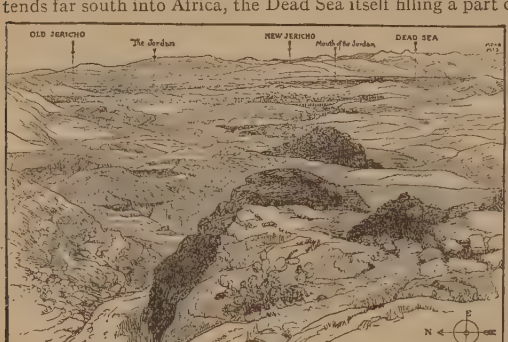
Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, the district west of Damascus and north of the tetrarchy of Herod Philip. No Jew at all, but a Roman, was governor (procurator) of Judæa, that is, Samaria, Judah, and the regions to the south. This governor was during the time of John and Christ the infamous Pontius Pilate, a savage and arbitrary ruler, constantly quarreling with his hated and hostile subjects.

Luke the methodical completes his notes of time by stating that John's ministry

7. He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

began in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, Annas having been high priest fifteen years before, and therefore (as the office was for life) still being regarded as the true high priest by the Jews, and his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, being one of the numerous high priests set up for a brief time by the Romans.

At this time John the Baptist appeared as a public teacher and preacher, as suddenly and mysteriously as his great predecessor Elijah the Tishbite, whom he so much resembled. "The wilderness" where he lived and taught is the wild region north and west of the Dead Sea, a vast and horrible succession of steep cliffs and barren ravines called the Arabah. This valley through which the Jordan flows is the deepest chasm in the earth's crust, and possesses the hottest climate in all the world. It was formed by a tremendous "slip" in the rocky strata, and the ancient rift extends far south into Africa, the Dead Sea itself filling a part of it. The lowest portion of this frightful depression is 1292 feet below the Mediterranean, while the Dead Sea is 1278 feet deep in addition.



Pictorial Map of the Wilderness of Judaea.

"In this great and terrible wilderness John supported himself by eating locusts — the literal insect, which is still greatly esteemed by the natives — and wild honey, which abounded in the crevices of the rocks; whilst for clothing he was content with a coat of coarse camel's hair, such as the Arab women make still; and a girdle of skin about his loins. A cave, like that in which David and his men often found refuge, sufficed him for a home, and the water of the streams that hurried to the Dead Sea, his beverage. Can we wonder that under such a regimen he grew strong!" — *Rev. F. B. Meyer, D.D.*

Brooding in this wilderness over the wickedness and sorrows of his country, John was irresistibly impelled to preach. "The word of God" came to him. He made excursions to Jericho and other thickly settled regions, and gave his message with such power that great throngs followed him when he retired to the desert again.

We have a thrilling summary of John's teachings. He was saturated with the words of the great prophets, especially Isaiah and Zechariah, and wove them into his sermons. He foretold the coming of the long-expected King, the Messiah. He urged that preparation should be made for his coming, as the rough Eastern roads were smoothed out, filled up, and straightened in preparation for a royal progress. Above all he preached a spiritual preparation, repentance for sin, and baptism as the outward sign of repentance. Such a message, enforced by all the strength of John's sturdy frame, mighty voice, and stern, pure character, had a tremendous influence over the thousands that heard him.

7. **He said therefore to the multitudes.** The tense of the Greek verb implies that what follows is the substance of a sermon often delivered: "He kept saying," "He used to say." Many companies of listeners are referred to, coming to him one after the other. **That went out to be baptized of him.** The primary thought of baptism is that of cleansing from sin, and no symbol is more suitable than that of the physical cleansing of the body by the use of water. The Jews were familiar with the thought from the many ceremonial cleansings, of the body, utensils, garments, and the like, which they practised as religious rites. **Ye offspring of vipers.** "It has been observed that John's figurative language is altogether the language of the desert." — *Prof. Marvin R. Vincent.* "Of nearly twenty-five species of serpents

8. Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9. And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do?

11. And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.

---

which are certainly known to be found in Syria and Palestine, four are deadly poisonous, five are somewhat poisonous, and the rest are absolutely harmless. The inhabitants do not clearly distinguish the non-poisonous ones." — *Prof. A. E. Day.* John was addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3 : 7), who were certainly as poisonous as the worst serpents. "He immediately and cheerfully offended them by calling them vipers. That must have reduced the size of the congregation. It is not likely that they had ever before been spoken to after that fashion. Out they went, angry and embarrassed, amidst the laughter of the publicans and soldiers." — *Dean George Hodges.* **Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** John had in mind "the serpents of all sorts lurking in the fields, which flee when the stubble is set on fire in harvest in preparation for the winter sowing." — *Expositor's Greek Testament.* John was surprised that Pharisees and Sadducees were in his congregation, actually seeming to be afraid of God's wrath which was directed against their evil hearts, cruel deeds, and hypocrisy.

8. **Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.** "In other words, 'Since you profess to have taken flight from the wrath to come, show at once, by your change of life, that your repentance is worth something, has some meaning in it." — *Dean Spence.* **And begin not to say within yourselves,** to argue that you, at least, have no necessity for repentance. **We have Abraham to our father.** "Some Jewish rabbis taught that no child of Abraham's could be lost, because the promise was that Abraham should always have a seed to serve God." — *Edwin W. Rice, D.D.* **For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.** John doubtless pointed to the stony banks of the Jordan. God can create other children of Abraham, said John, and from the least promising material; he does not need to preserve you in order to keep his promise of perpetual descendants to the patriarch.

9. **And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees.** "Even now" — "although you do not at all expect it. The image of the axe is in harmony with that of the fruits (verse 8). In the East trees are valued mainly for their fruit; and trees which produce none are usually cut down." — *International Critical Commentary.* **Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit.** "The axe was the heathen Roman, even then master of the land. But God, not the Roman Cæsar merely, was laying the axe. And he was a good God, who only wanted goodness, which he would preserve; not badness, which he would destroy." — *Charles Kingsley.* **Is hewn down, and cast into the fire.** The wood of many fruit-trees cannot be used for anything except as fire-wood. It is a picture of the absolute worthlessness of all lives that are not lived for God.

II. **THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE,** vs. 10–14. The Fruit of Kindness.

10. **And the multitudes asked him.** "There was a positiveness about John that would naturally attract, in a drifting, shifting, vacillating age. The strong will is magnetic; the weaker wills follow and cluster round it, as swarming bees cluster around their queen." — *Rev. Henry Burton, D.D.* **Saying, What then must we do?** "The purpose of religion is not met until that question is asked and answered, and the answer is translated into terms of life." — *Dean George Hodges.* Religion is practical or it is nothing.

11. **And he answered and said unto them.** "His answers in each case referred to their ordinary duties and temptations. They were not to forsake their work that they might serve God more punctually and faithfully,— that would be a distrust and denial of him. They were to serve him in their work." — *F. D. Maurice.* **He**

12. And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do?

13. And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you.

14. And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse *any one* wrongfully; and be content with your wages.

---

that hath two coats. The chiton, or tunic, an under-garment like a shirt. In Matt. 5 : 40 Christ bids his followers give these away freely. **Let him impart to him that hath none.** Two tunics are one too many, said the simple-living John, so long as there is any one who has no tunic at all. It is the Christian principle of sharing, to be carried out whenever and wherever the sharing will do good and will not merely minister to sloth or viciousness. **And he that hath food, let him do likewise.** Probably the majority of persons in the world spend most of their lives hungry, seldom if ever having their physical needs thoroughly satisfied. In our land of plenty we have no conception of the misery in such a country as India, for example.

THE FRUIT OF JUSTICE. 12. **And there came also publicans to be baptized.** The publicans were collectors of taxes — not of the direct taxes, which at this time were paid to Roman officials, but of the taxes on imports and exports and on the goods of merchants passing through the country. These tolls were collected on roads and bridges, where travellers were stopped and their goods examined. The publicans paid certain sums for the privilege of collecting taxes, and were allowed to keep all over this sum which they collected. The laws were vague and extortion was easy and universal; hence the publicans were thoroughly hated by the Jews. **And they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do?** That these hard-hearted extortioners asked this question at all showed that they had in them the possibilities of good which Christ was always eager to recognize and bring out.

13. **Extort no more than that which is appointed you.** The ancient Syriac version is, "Exact no more than ye are required to exact." John was a patriot, but he did not bid the publicans leave the service of the hated Roman conquerors, but simply to keep within the Roman laws in their tax-collecting. The converted Zacchæus promised to restore his exactions fourfold.

THE FRUIT OF MERCY. 14. **And soldiers also asked him.** "The word means *soldiers on the march.* They may have been soldiers of Herod Antipas, employed in the troubles which arose from his desertion of his wife, the daughter of King Hareth (Aretas) of Arabia, for his niece and brother's wife, Herodias." — *F. W. Farrar.* Other scholars, however, say that the quarrel with Aretas took place too long before this time. **Extort from no man by violence.** The Syriac version is, "Be insolent to no one." The verb, which means to shake, is used by Greek medical writers (as by Hippocrates) of shaking benumbed limbs and the like. Conscious of their power, soldiers are always tempted to extort money and goods by intimidating the poor and weak. **Neither accuse any one wrongfully.** Professor Moffatt translates it, "Never lay a false charge." The Greek is only one word which is literally, "Do not sycophantize." A sycophant was, literally, a fig-shower. The origin of the word is unknown, but it evidently had to do with the disclosure of illegal practices relating to figs, one of the chief products of Greece, and thus the verb came to mean to inform against one, and then to inform *falsely.*

THE FRUIT OF CONTENTMENT. **And be content with your wages.** "It is remarkable that the Baptist does not bid even soldiers to *abandon* their profession, but to serve God in it. This is important as showing that he did not hold up the life of the hermit or the ascetic as a model or ideal for all." — *Cambridge Bible.* Contentment with wages is anything but a common virtue in these days of labor troubles.

OTHER FRUITS OF REPENTANCE. Of course the principle fruit of repentance is ceasing the wrongdoing, whatever it is. As the little girl said, "Repentance is being sorry enough to quit."

Repentance also includes remorse. We must not forget our sin, but keep it sufficiently before us so that we shall not stumble into it again.

Repentance involves confession to all involved, and asking forgiveness. If we are too proud to do this, we have not really repented.

Repentance leads to restitution so far as it is possible; though, alas! it is

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ ;

16. John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water ; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose : he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and *in* fire :

17. Whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner ; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

---

never possible wholly to restore the ruin wrought by sin. —

Repentance bears fruit in peace, in the glad consciousness that once more we are right with God and man. Also it bears fruit in power : we are able to help others out of the pit which we know so well.

III. **THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT,** vs. 15–38. 15. **And as the people were in expectation.** What follows implies that they were expecting the long-promised Messiah, who would free them from bondage to the Romans and restore the ancient glories of the Jews. **And all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John.** The hermit sect of the Essenes had their central home in the oasis of Engedi near by, and John must have known them well, though he was not of them. He "cannot be accounted for by any of the pre-existing conditions of his time. He stood alone in his God-given might." — *F. B. Meyer.* No wonder men talked about him and their hearts were full of him. **Whether happily he were the Christ.** Later, men wondered whether Christ were not John the Baptist risen from the dead.

16. **John answered, saying unto them all.** Professor Moffatt prints vs. 16, 17 as a poem, bringing out the rhythmical quality of John's inspired utterance. In John 1 : 19–28 we learn of a deputation of priests and Levites sent from the Sanhedrin to ask who John claimed to be, to whom he gave the following reply in fuller form. **I indeed baptize you with water.** This was the most marked characteristic of John's ministry, whence he is called the Baptist. **But there cometh he that is mightier than I.** Stronger, able to accomplish more. "He must increase," as John afterwards said, "but I must decrease." John had the modesty of true greatness. **The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.** "The strings of whose shoes I am not worthy to untie." — *Syriac Version.* John felt himself unworthy to perform for Jesus the menial task of a slave, unfastening the dusty thongs of his sandals. **He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit.** So that the believer is surrounded by and penetrated with the Holy Spirit. **And in fire.** "In its first and most literal sense the allusion is to the fiery tongues of Pentecost (Acts 2 : 3) ; but the secondary and metaphoric allusion is to the burning zeal and illuminating light of the Spirit. St. Jerome sees a further allusion to fiery trials (Luke 12 : 49 ; Mark 9 : 49 ; 1 Pet. 4 : 12) and to the fire of judgment (1 Cor. 3 : 13) ; but these cannot be regarded as certain." — *Cambridge Bible.*

Sandals and Shoe Latchets.

17. **Whose fan is in his hand.** "When the wheat is reaped, it is bound in sheaves and carted to the threshing-floor, which is generally a circular spot of hard ground from fifty to one hundred feet in diameter. On this the wheat is threshed from the chaff by manual labor, but the two lie intermingled till the evening, when the grain is caught up in broad shovels or fans, and thrown against the evening breeze, as it passes swiftly over the fevered land ;

thus the chaff is borne away, while the wheat falls heavily to the earth." — *Haslings.* **Thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor.** The first three words are one word in the Greek, which is literally " to clean *through*." " In that preposition lies the picture of the farmer beginning at one side of the floor, and working *through* to the other, cleansing as he goes." — *Prof. Marvin R. Vincent.* **And to gather the wheat into his garner.** Christ used the same comparison in his parable of the wheat and the tares, Matt. 13 : 30. By the wheat, of course, are meant the true followers of Christ, those that believe on him and in his strength do his will. **But the chaff he will burn up.** The word " chaff " includes the straw and stubble of the grain. By the chaff are meant the evil elements of mankind, bad men that get into the church, even the unworthy elements of a mixed character, as in the case of Peter (Luke 22 : 31 ; see also Ps. 1 : 4 ; Jer. 15 : 7 ; Mal. 4 : 1). **With unquenchable fire.** " The fire is here termed ' unquenchable ' because, when once the dry chaff was set on fire, nothing the peasants could do would arrest the swift work of the devouring flame." — *Pulpit Commentary.* It is a terrible picture of the sure fate of the wicked.

From a photograph by A. Forder.
Winnowing Grain.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT. " One day while John was preaching, and the crowds pressed close to listen to his fierce words of condemnation, John suddenly paused. Over his face, splendid in its rough and fearless strength, there broke a light of wonder. His deep voice fell silent, in the midst perhaps of a scathing rebuke to hypocrites, and when he spoke again there was a gentleness, a deep reverence in his tones. Along the path by the river a Man was approaching, and what a Man. Surely no self-seeking, no cruelty or hypocrisy, had ever found a place in his soul. His face and being were more glorious than that of any earthly king, and among that crowd of men he shone like one bright star in the twilight sky." — *Mary Stewart.*

Matthew (3 : 13–17) tells us how John protested that he, rather than baptize Jesus, himself needed baptism from Jesus ; but our Lord bade John proceed, since he must " fulfil all righteousness." He would himself do all that he asked his followers to do, thus setting a perfect example for them.

As Jesus came up out of the water praying, he received from the opening heavens the plain witness of his Messiahship. The Spirit of God descended upon him, quietly, softly, in a bodily form which both Jesus and John (John 1 : 34) compared to a dove. As further witness, a voice was heard from the skies, saying, " *Thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am well pleased.*" This is the first of three such testimonies, the other two being at Christ's transfiguration and in the courts of the temple during Passion Week.

" I think we shall best understand what the baptism of the Holy Ghost meant in the case of Jesus, if we look on it as the outpouring of the Spirit on him to give him a deeper, fuller, richer spiritual life than even he had ever known. This event, I believe, marks a distinct stage in the personal spiritual history of our Lord." — *Rev. G. H. C. MacGregor.*

Every Christian should have the same blessed experience, and will have it if he follows his Master in the way of prayerful obedience, doing Christ's will through baptism and in all other ways.

IN HEROD'S PRISON. The account in Luke anticipates the story of John's life by telling briefly how he dared to rebuke Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of the region in which John was probably preaching, east of the Jordan. The Baptist condemned Herod's many crimes, and especially because he had sent back to her father his lawful wife and instead had stolen away from his half-brother that brother's wife Herodias, who was his own niece, so that it was a doubly shameful deed. John

was sent perhaps to Herod's palace-fortress of Machærus, east of the Dead Sea, or perhaps to a prison in Tiberias of Galilee, the city which Herod had himself built.

There John, the active, outdoor preacher, was left to languish, all because he had dared to proclaim even to his ruler the law of right and of purity, and call upon him to repent. One word of apology would have freed John, but the true-hearted prophet would not speak it.

We Should Be Reformers. We may not have John the Baptist's natural power, but we can have all the power we need for our tasks. If God sends us on John-the-Baptist errands, he will give us John-the-Baptist strength.

The world is still full of iniquities as terrible as any against which John the Baptist thundered. Still the poor are oppressed. Still the crafty deal falsely. Still the violent rage against the weak. Still men yield to their lowest and most sensual temptations. Still wicked men get into high places.

If we see these evils, the perception of them is God's call upon us to do what we can to reform them. However little, we must do what we can. We can speak against them, though only to our neighbors and in prayer meeting. We can vote against them at every election. We may be able to write letters against them and get protests into the papers.

And above all, we must reform ourselves, cleanse our own hearts, receive the fire of the Holy Spirit, and make ourselves instruments with which he can work. The outcome, then, will be in his hands and not in ours.

LESSON IV. — October 22.

JESUS TEMPTED. — Luke 4 : 1–30.

PRINT vs. 1–13.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.* — Heb. 2 : 18.

Devotional Reading : Heb. 4 : 14—5 : 10.
Reference Material : Phil. 2 : 5–11 ; Heb. 2 : 14–18 ; 4 : 14–16.
Primary Topic : Jesus Overcomes Temptation.
Lesson Material : Luke 4 : 1–13.
Memory Verse: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. Luke 4 : 8.
Junior Topic : Jesus Tempted to Do Wrong.
Lesson Material : Luke 4 : 1–13.
Memory Verses : Matt. 4 : 10, 11.
Intermediate and Senior Topic: Overcoming Temptation.
Topic for Young People and Adults : What Christ's Victory Means to Us.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will tell the lesson story and may then apply it in the following way. Ask them to come with slips of paper naming as many as possible of the temptations that come to young people, one temptation on a slip. Put these in a black box and draw them out one by one. Place in a Bible slips of paper on each of which is written a Bible verse hepful in a common temptation met by children, such as for anger : " A soft answer turneth away wrath." " Anger " will be written on the projecting end of the slip. Thus the slips will be easily selected after each temptation is read.

The Intermediate Classes will of course continue their " time sticks."

The Older Classes will discuss the nature of Christ's temptations and their bearing on his ministry, and then will proceed to discuss the physical, mental, and spiritual temptations of modern men and women, each discussion being led by a member of the class appointed in advance.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Soon after the baptism, in January or February, A. D. 27, Christ being thirty years old.

Place. — In the wilderness region southeast of Jerusalem, perhaps near Jericho ; also on the roof of the temple and on an unknown mountain.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The south-Judæan wilderness.
The Bible portrait of Satan.
Why and how Jesus was tempted.
Fastings in the Bible and in modern days.
Christ's knowledge and use of the Old Testament.
The inner meaning of each of Christ's temptations.
The victory at Nazareth.
Our spiritual temptations.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: How Jesus Overcame Temptation and How We May Overcome It.

I. TEMPTATIONS OF THE BODY, vs. 1–4.
The Spirit's leading.
The devil's tempting.
The snare of hunger.
Our physical temptations.

II. TEMPTATIONS OF THE MIND, vs. 5–8.
Worldly ambition.
Devil worship.
Divine worship.
Our mental temptations.

III. TEMPTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT, vs. 9–13.
Tempting God.
Trusting God.
Our Lord's victory.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Few artists have attempted these scenes. A panel by Ghiberti on the Baptistery gate at Florence. Fresco by Botticelli in the Sistine Chapel at Rome. Other representations by Perugino, Lucas Van Leyden, Tintoretto, Hofmann, Morelli, Tissot, Cornicelius. Ary Scheffer's "Temptation" is especially fine.

THE TEACHER'S LIBARRY.

Knight's *The Temptation of Our Lord*. McClelland's *The Mind of Christ*. "Ian Maclaren's" *The Life of the Master*. Snowden's *Scenes and Sayings in the Life of Christ*. Morgan's *The Crises of the Christ*. Jowett's *College Sermons*. Lorimer's *The Galilean*. Kingsley's *All Saints' Day*. George Adam Smith's *The Forgiveness of Sins*. Coyle's *The Imperial Christ*. Sermon by Rev. John I. Armstrong in *The Bible Magazine*, September, 1914. Wilson's *The Christ We Forget*. Jefferson's *Doctrine and Deed*. Hodges's *The Year of Grace: Advent to Trinity*. Freeman's *Concerning the Christ*. Robertson's *Epochs in the Life of Jesus*. Bishop Thompson's *The World and the Man* is a brilliant treatise on the Temptation. Glazebrook's *Prospice*. Evans's *Epochs in the Life of Christ*. Murray's *Studies in the Temptation of the Son of God*. Stewart's *The Temptation of Jesus*.

1. And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness.

I. **TEMPTATIONS OF THE BODY,** vs. 1–4. Our Lord's temptation took place (Mark 1 : 12) immediately after his baptism, and was related to that great event. The voice from heaven at his baptism was the definite revelation to Jesus of his divine nature and infinite task. It marked the close of his period of preparation and the opening of his period of service. The forty days in the wilderness were his final and decisive consecration to his task. "From that retirement he emerges with the end of his ministry clear and calmly faced, and conditions of work fixed to which throughout he unswervingly adheres. He is withdrawn with *purpose and end* accepted. He comes forth with *means and laws of action* determined." — *Principal H. J. C. Knight.* Compare Paul's withdrawal to Arabia at the outset of his ministry and the life of John the Baptist, of Elijah, and of Moses before each took up his great task.

1. **And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,** and doubtless thus enabled to see and hear what is usually hidden from mortal eyes and ears. **Returned from the Jordan,** where he had been baptized. "It was the psychological moment. Every new convert has a fresh struggle with the devil after his baptism. 'Now, you have gone and made a fool of yourself,' the devil will say." — *Prof. A. T. Robertson.* **And was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.** Mark (1 : 12) says that Jesus was *driven* by the Spirit into the wilderness, but it was an inward impulsion, for the Spirit was within him. "Tissot pictures Jesus as borne swiftly on the finger-tips of a gigantic spectre; but when you look closely you see that this great spectre is just the shadow of Jesus himself." — *Rev. T. Calvin McClelland, D.D.* Matt. 4 : 1 tells us that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. Now we are told (Jas. 1 : 13) that God "tempteth no man." Truly "God tempts no one to sin; but he certainly tests all men in the interests of righteousness. It is the purpose of God that every soul shall fight its way to heaven." — *George C. Lorimer.* "Tradition has fixed upon a hill district bordering on the road which leads up from Jericho to Jerusalem, as the scene of the temptation. The hill itself, from being the supposed spot where the Lord spent these forty days, is named Quarantania. The rocks in this neighborhood contain many caves." — *Pulpit Commentary.*

2. **During forty days.** "The whole forty-day period was full of temptation." — *Rev. John I. Armstrong.* And also of the Spirit's leading. **Being tempted of the**

2. During forty days, being tempted of the devil. And he did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, he hungered.

3. And the devil said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread.

devil. It was a real temptation, resisted with pain, a temptation to which Jesus, sinless as he was, might have yielded. If it was otherwise, Jesus was not tempted as we are, and would be no example for us. "Jesus overcame not because he was

From a photograph by Bonfils.

Mount Quaratania.
Traditional Place of the Lord's Temptation.

invulnerable, but because he was strong; and therefore there is no man or woman anywhere, sorely beset in the spiritual warfare, who has not in him a Friend and Saviour." — "*Ian Maclaren.*" "Temptation has its use in the world. Had we been building a world, we would have shut temptation out, but God let it in. A world of moral development would not be possible without temptation. There is nothing wrong, then, in being tempted; the wrong begins only when we consent to it. Yet we are not to run into temptation of our own accord. Jesus did not go of himself, but was led of the Spirit." — *Rev. James H. Snowden, D.D.*

It is perfectly plain that the devil is no mere symbol of evil, but is revealed by the Bible to be a real person, a terrible antagonist. "To Jesus evil was a force and an intention outside of man, though it had allies within him. It was a power bigger than man himself could breed; which hungered for the souls of men and could finally have them for his own with the same absoluteness as he the Son of God and Saviour of the world longed to make them his. Temptation is a downright battle for life, with a strong and inexorable foe." — *Sir George Adam Smith.* "If there is no devil, it is not complimentary to man to make him originally responsible for all the evil in the world." — *Prof. A. T. Robertson.*

And he did eat nothing in those days. Fasts of forty days or more have been accomplished by several during recent years, the most remarkable being those of Mayor MacSwiney and Joseph Murphy, Irish hunger strikers, who died in 1920 after fasting seventy-five and seventy-four days respectively. Moses (Ex. 34 : 28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19 : 8) each fasted for forty days. Christ was exalted by his religious meditations above the need of food, and was too absorbed in his great contest to eat. **And when they were completed, he hungered.** Intense hunger as the result of the long fast.

3. **And the devil said unto him.** Whether Satan appeared in bodily form and spoke with audible voice, or appeared and spoke no less actually to Christ's inner

4. And Jesus answered unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

5. And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

---

being, we are not told and it is not necessary for us to know. "The meaning and not the form of the narrative is important to us, and the meaning is apt to be lost in the form." — *Benjamin Jowett.* **If thou art the Son of God.** The Father, speaking from the opening heaven at Christ's baptism, had just said that he was God's Son; but the devil suggests that it might be as well to test the matter. Taking God at his word is never the devil's way. **Command this stone that it become bread.** Literally, "a loaf." "These stones were perhaps those 'siliceous accretions,' which assume the exact shape of little loaves of bread, and which were represented in legend as the petrified fruits of the cities of the plain. The very appearance of these stones, like the bread for which the faint body hungered, may have added force to the temptation. This resemblance may have been present to Christ's mind in his words at Matt. 7 : 9." — *Prof. Marvin R. Vincent.* But the chief force of the temptation went deeper than Christ's personal hunger. In effect, it was a temptation to place his ministry on the low plane of the senses. That was what the Jews wanted, a Messiah who would feed their bodies and clothe them, conquer the Romans, and save them from the necessity of paying taxes. Should Christ be the Messiah they wanted, or, on an infinitely higher plane, the Messiah they needed?

4. **And Jesus answered unto him.** Now we discover what our Lord's education had been during the thirty silent years at Nazareth. He had become a Man of the Book. He had instant command of the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. **It is written.** In Deut. 8 : 3. Jesus, hungry in the wilderness, remembers the lesson which God taught his hungry people in the wilderness in the days of Moses. **Man shall not live by bread alone.** The lower man may exist on bread, but the higher man needs also the spiritual food that comes only from obedience to God. **But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** Christ said later that his meat was to do God's will (John 4 : 32–34); compare Job 23 : 12; Jer. 15 : 16. "It is as though Christ had said, 'I am hungry, but as that lies within the will of God for me, I choose the hunger in that will, rather than to find any satisfaction outside it." — *Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.*

OUR PHYSICAL TEMPTATIONS. It is hard to master the physical temptations because they are based on natural and reasonable desires and even necessities, as that we must eat and drink; but it is very easy to go on to gluttony and drunkenness.

Illustration. "You may meet in the tropics a lovely little coral snake, its mouth so small that it seems impossible that it can bite, and so gentle that children can take it up and play with it. But if the play goes one step too far the snake loses its temper, gives one tiny scratch upon the lip or finger, and that scratch is certain death. It is all the more dangerous because there is another sort of coral snake perfectly harmless, which is so exactly like the deadly one that no child, and few grown people, can know them apart." — *Charles Kingsley.*

The temptations of the material life, the lower life, are often embodied in money. "The world says to every able man, 'If you are the Son of God, if you are the man you think you are, put money in your purse, put money in your purse.'" — *John P. Coyle, D.D.*

"A man is not a body; he *has* a body, he *is* a soul; if the soul dies the man dies even though the body is glutted with plenty." — *Rev. T. Calvin McClelland, D.D.* This is the lesson so hard to learn. "I buffet my body," said Paul, and we need to buffet it to keep it under and the soul on top.

II. **TEMPTATIONS OF THE MIND,** vs. 5–8. Matthew places this temptation last, but it is a less subtle and perilous temptation than the one that Luke places last. Milton, in *Paradise Regained,* adopts Luke's order.

5. **And he led him up.** "Unto an exceeding high mountain," Matthew says. We are not told what mountain or how Jesus was taken there. **And showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.** Of course no mountain on earth presents such a view to a vision that is not supernaturally strengthened.

6. **And the devil said unto him.** Appealing to one of the noblest thoughts that reigned in Christ's mind, the knowledge that he was intended to hold sway over the

6. And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them : for it hath been delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will give it.

7. If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine.

8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

---

hearts of all men. **To thee will I give all this authority.** "The suggestion was that Christ should strike at once for Cæsar's seat. The land was seething with rebellion. The people of Galilee afterwards begged him to take this step. They, too, saw the power of a Cæsar in him. It cannot be doubted that, had he used his power in that direction, he could have hurled the Tyrant of the Tiber from his throne, and seated himself in his place. But to play the Cæsar for a season would mean nothing to him who came to be the King of all kingdoms forever." — *J. D. Freeman.* **And the glory of them.** Christ sought for glory, as is shown in his last prayer (John 17 : 4, 5) ; but it was God's glory primarily, and his own glory only as he was God's Son. **For it hath been delivered unto me.** Jesus knew the devil as "a liar, and the father thereof" (John 8 : 44). **And to whomsoever I will I give it.** Christ knew very well the age-long, toilsome way that stretched out before his gospel, culminating in a world wholly God's ; and here was the Tempter promising it all without labor and waiting, as a gift !

7. **If thou therefore wilt worship before me,** or "do homage before me." "The tempter's aim was, as in the first temptation, to detach the will of Jesus from the Father's will, and to induce him to set up a sort of independence." — *Expositor's Bible.* **It shall all be thine.** In the lower sense, the world was the devil's, and is still ; but how little of it Satan has to give ! "There was then living one to whom, in as high an ambitious sense as has ever been realized, it *did* all belong — the Emperor Tiberius. But so far from enjoying it he was at this very time the most miserable and most degraded of men." — *F. W. Farrar.*

8. **And Jesus answered and said unto him.** Slightly altering the words of Deut. 6 : 13. **It is written.** "All Christ's divine knowledge, ready for instant use, was available as munitions of war. There was not one page in Holy Writ that did not furnish him with a high explosive, the thunder of which reverberates to this day. He did not waste one moment on dates and authorship, on alleged discrepancies and erasures in manuscripts, and such-like bow-and-arrow tactics. He took the words as written." — *P. Whitwell Wilson.* **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.** How much more Jesus might have said, about the higher kingdom where Satan had no power, the Kingdon of Heaven ! But it is never profitable to argue with the devil ; merely rebuke him, as Christ did. **And him only shalt thou serve.** Whoever and whatever, aside from Jehovah, calls upon us for the supreme allegiance of our lives is of the devil and not of God.

Our Mental Temptations. The great temptation of the mind is self-seeking. "If you have any kingship or queenship in you, make sure to use it for redemptive ends ! Sing no song that is not fit for Christ to hear ! Paint no picture which you would not dare to hold up before his gaze ! Write no book which you would not lay upon his altar ! If you can hold a seat in Parliament, hold it for your country's good ! The moment you begin to use it for 'miserable aims that end with self,' you forfeit your right to it." — *J. D. Freeman.*

"In its deepest meaning this temptation marks the decisive moment in the age-long battle against every form of Might that claims for itself the homage and obedience which the will of man owes to Right and Right alone." — *J. O. F. Murray, D.D.* Satan has might, worldliness has might, a terrible power which ambition recognizes. But God and right will triumph in the end, and the practical recognition of that truth will conquer this temptation. No one can live successfully until he thinks unselfishly.

III. **TEMPTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT,** vs. 9–13. "The first temptation had been to natural appetite and impulse ; the second was to unhallowed ambition ; the third is to rash confidence and spiritual pride. It was based, with profound ingenuity, on the expression of absolute trust with which the first temptation had been rejected." — *Cambridge Bible.*

9. And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence :

10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee :

11. And, On their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

9. **And he led him to Jerusalem.** Doubtless our Lord remembered the prophecy of Malachi which we studied at the close of the last quarter (Mal. 3 : 1), which foretold that the Messiah should "suddenly come to his temple," and the temptation was to make a sudden and startling fulfilment of that prophecy, thus proving himself to be the Messiah. **And set him on the pinnacle of the temple.** One of the wings of the temple. It was probably the top of the magnificent Royal Porch, which Herod had built upon a wall reaching up from the deep valley of the Kedron, 450 to 600 feet below. James the Just, our Lord's brother and the writer of the Epistle, is said to have been thrown from a pinnacle of the temple into the court. **And said unto him, if thou art the Son of God.** Satan cannot speak without an "if." Again he seeks to plant a doubt in Christ's mind. **Cast thyself down from hence.** Browning, in his wonderful poem, *Red Cotton Nightcap Country*, has his hero die in yielding to precisely this temptation to make trial of God.

From a photograph by Wilson.
Valley of the Kedron.

10. **For it is written.** The devil has twice been beaten by the Bible ; now he will himself seize the sacred weapon.

> "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
> An evil soul producing holy witness
> Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
> A deadly apple rotten at the heart."
> — *Shakespeare, "The Merchant of Venice."*

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee. Satan quotes from the lovely and comforting Ps. 91, vs. 11, 12. **To guard thee.** Satan omits "in all thy ways." God had promised to keep him in all God's ways, and that promise abides always sure, but this was not one of those ways. Satan and not God had put Jesus on the pinnacle. Satan and not God is suggesting that he cast himself down." — *Rev. John I. Armstrong.*

11. **And, On their hands they shall bear thee up.** The "everlasting arms" being *underneath* (Deut. 33 : 27). **Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.** Pointing to the rocks far down in the black chasm of the Kedron below.

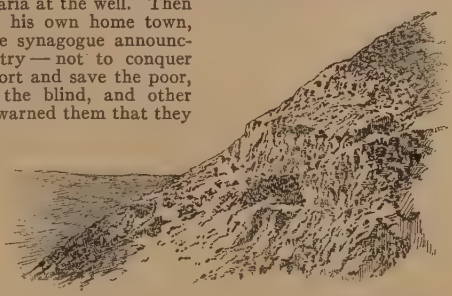
12. **And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said.** Christ quotes from Deut. 6 : 16, "from the chapter that contains one of the passages written on the phylacteries that were probably used by our Lord himself." — *Ellicott.* **Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.** "As ye tempted him in Massah" (Meribah) is added in Deuteronomy, referring to Ex. 17 : 1–7 when the distrustful people murmured against God and were answered by water from the rock.

13. And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season.

Illustration. "There are times when Bassanio's plea, 'To do a great right, do a little wrong,' sounds in our ears with almost irresistible force. One of the most touching scenes in all literature is that of the trial in Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*, where the heroine is tempted through her best affections. By a single word she can save the life of a weak, but not a wicked sister whom she loves intensely — save her from a felon's death. She has but to say that her sister has told her something : but it is not true. The heroism with which she resists that awful temptation has given her a place in our hearts." — *Canon Glazebrook.*

13. **And when the devil had completed every temptation.** "'Every kind of temptation' : a further indication that Christ was tempted throughout the forty days, and that what is recorded is merely an illustration of what took place. The enemy tried all his weapons, and was at all points defeated." — *International Critical Commentary.* **He departed from him for a season.** "Of course he did. There was nothing more for him to do. There are limits beyond which even the devil cannot go. But again and again throughout the life of Jesus the devil returned, and always with the same old offer of the kingdoms." — *Rev. Charles E. Jefferson, D.D.* Matthew tells us that angels then came and ministered to him, doubtless providing food for his wasted body and peace for his soul after the long struggle with temptations.

THE VICTORY AT NAZARETH. John, whose Gospel records the Judæan ministry of our Lord, tells us of events following the temptation that are not recorded by Luke. These are chiefly the call of the first disciples, the first miracle at Cana, the passover at Jerusalem with the first cleansing of the temple and the conversation with Nicodemus. About this time John the Baptist was imprisoned, an event which probably hastened Christ's return to Galilee. On his way north he had the conversation with the woman of Samaria at the well. Then Luke records Christ's visit to his own home town, Nazareth, his preaching in the synagogue announcing the purpose of his ministry — not to conquer worldly kingdoms but to comfort and save the poor, the sorrowful, the prisoners, the blind, and other wretched folks. But when he warned them that they were not to require of him miracles though he had worked them in neighboring towns, in a quick burst of wrath they rushed him off to a near-by cliff about forty feet high, and were about to hurl him over. Jesus, however, possessed a majestic dignity and manifest power which overawed mobs. Moreover, he was still filled with the mighty Spirit of God (verse 14). He calmly walked through the midst of the raging throng and left his home town, probably never to return again. How easy it would have been for him to work a miracle at Nazareth and thus win the enthusiastic following of his townsmen ! But he had learned too well the lesson of the three temptations.



From a photograph.

Cliff above Nazareth.

OUR SPIRITUAL TEMPTATIONS. "Shall I commend the truth by simply telling the truth, or shall I also amaze or scare or force people into accepting it ? It was this fundamental question of method which was answered in the third temptation." — *Dean George Hodges.*

In a thousand ways we are tempted to distrust God's quiet ways, to lose faith in the triumph of truth. We conquer this subtle spiritual temptation as we get confidence in the Bible, as we rely upon prayer, as we lean upon our heavenly Father and calmly confide all our lives to him.

Bishop Thompson insists that in a pestilence the best prayer is the use of the means of sanitation ; that when a captain disregards his charts and drives his ship on the rocks he has no right to expect the Almighty to save it ; that "a man

cannot be a glutton and then blame his Maker for dyspepsia." We are to live in accordance with God's laws, and then God can help us in accordance with his laws.

"If we know that reading a certain book, going to a certain place, keeping certain company, doing certain things, will lead us into sin, then it is manifestly tempting God for us to read those books, attend those places, keep those companionships, and do those things. Thou shalt not set traps for the Lord thy God." — *Dean William Evans, D.D.*

"When you are in doubt or difficulty, or harassed in any wise, wait : stand firm and still. If you are where God put you, he will meet you where you are. And if he send you or beckon you across even very rough, hard discouragements, or through pressing perils, walk : go forward to the place he has appointed, and he will guard your way. Thus tempt him not ; but trust him and obey." — *A. Morris Stewart.*

LESSON V. — October 29.

WORLD-WIDE PROHIBITION. — Isaiah 61 : 1–9.

(World's Temperance Sunday.)

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Righteousness exalteth a nation ; But sin is a reproach to any people.*** — PROV. 14 : 34.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 93.
Reference Material : Matt. 7 : 15–20 ; Rom. 14 : 13.
Primary Topic : HOW FOUR BOYS BECAME HEALTHY AND HAPPY.
Lesson Material : Dan. 1 : 3–20. Print vs. 8–20.
Memory Verse. We will drink no wine. Jer. 35 : 6.
Junior Topic : DESTROYING THE WORLD'S ENEMY.
Lesson Material : Isa. 61 : 1–9.
Memory Verse : Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice. Amos 5 : 15.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : THE NEXT STEP IN THE PROHIBITION CAMPAIGN.
Topic for Young People and Adults : PROGRESS OF PROHIBITION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may make this a newspaper recitation. Prohibition is so common a theme in the papers that all the pupils can readily make some clippings bearing on it during the week, and bring them to the class on Sunday for discussion. Primary pupils have the familiar story of Daniel (see Lesson II, Third Quarter). All grades will be interested in a discussion of the benefits of prohibition in our land, and of the gradual growth of prohibition sentiment in foreign lands.

The Older Classes will find the lesson text so full of points applicable to the temperance reform as to convince any one of its vital relation to Christianity. Assign the different verses to the members of the class in advance, each to make the prohibition applications of his verse. One member of the class may be asked to speak on the benefits of prohibition in the United States and another on prohibition progress over the world.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — This prophecy must have been written late in the life of Isaiah, who died (Professor Beecher) about B. C. 679. Prof. George L. Robinson, in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* dates this propehcy soon after B. C. 701. Believers in "the Second Isaiah" date the prophecy two centuries later, in the exile.

Place. — Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The picture of the Messiah given in this passage.
The bearing of Christianity on social reform.
Social evils of the drink traffic.
What prohibition has done for the United States.
Hindrances to the full working of prohibition.
Growth of temperance reform in other lands.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Destroying the World's Enemy.

I. THE GOSPEL OF TEMPERANCE, VS. 1–3.

Binding up the broken-hearted.
Opening the prison doors.
A garland for ashes.
Prohibition applications.

II. THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF PROHIBITION, VS. 4–9.

Building the old wastes.
The wealth of the nations.
Justice for robbery.
Make prohibition world-wide.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Isaiah by Skinner (*Cambridge Bible*), Rawlinson (*Pulpit Commentary*), Wade (*Westminster Commentary*), Whitehouse (*New Century Bible*), George Adam Smith (*Expositor's Bible*), Peake (*International Critical Commentary*), Maclaren (*Expositions*), *Speaker's Commentary*, Ellicott, Gray, Dummelow, etc. *Scientific Temperance Journal. The American Issue. The Alliance News and Temperance Reformer* (London). Hobson's *Alcohol and the Human Race.* Gordon's *The Anti-Alcohol Movement in Europe. The No-Tobacco Journal.*

1. The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me ; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening *of the prison* to them that are bound ;

2. To proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ;

THE GOSPEL OF TEMPERANCE, vs. 1–3. Our verses are taken from the third of the three great sections of the book of Isaiah, chapters 56–66, in which the prophet pictures marvelously the future blessedness of Israel, contrasted with the woe of those that fall away from Jehovah.

1. **The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me.** Who is the speaker ? Some say that it is the prophet himself, others that it is the Servant, Isaiah's representation of the Messiah, the wonderful foregleam of Jesus Christ. That our Lord, in his sermon at Nazareth, quoted this passage as describing himself and his work (Luke 4 : 18, 19) is not decisive, since "the ideal prophet is as truly a type of Christ as the Servant himself." — *Cambridge Bible.* In either case, the words that follow are a glorious portrait of the Saviour. **Because Jehovah hath anointed me.** "Christ" and "Messiah" both mean "the anointed one." Anointing, or the pouring of oil on the head, was employed in consecrating prophets, priests, and kings. The influence of the Holy Spirit is compared to this consecrating oil, and Christ is the ideal Prophet, Priest, and King. **To preach good tidings unto the meek.** "Gospel" is an old English word meaning "God spell" or "news about God" ; "evangel" is from two Greek words meaning "good news," "good tidings." "Meek" means not only "submissive" but "poor, distressed." Christ came to bring to all such people the good news that God loved them, was on their side, would take care of them, was even dying for them. **He hath sent me.** "Missionary" means "one sent." Christ was the greatest of all missionaries. **To bind up the broken-hearted.** "'Binding up' is an ordinary expression in Isaiah's writings for 'healing.'" — *Pulpit Commentary.* Christ himself died on the cross of a broken heart ; his life and death were one ministry to the sorrowful ; he is the Good Physician who knows how to heal this saddest of all diseases. **To proclaim liberty to the captives.** This is a rich promise. It involves the convicts in prison and all who remained in exile. It is a phrase used of the return of alienated property and the release of bondmen in the year of jubilee. It also means freedom from the bondage of sin. "Ye shall know the truth," said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free" (John 8 : 32). The spread of Christianity has always meant the extension of true liberty. **And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.** "Opening" is a Hebrew word used often of the opening of the eyes ; perhaps it is used here in allusion to the flood of light which is to stream in upon the horrible darkness of the dungeons.

Ancient Anointing Horn.

2. **To proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor.** "Year" is not literal but means the inauguration of a new era in which God's love for his children shall have full and free

3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified.

expression in manifold blessings and unbounded joy. **And the day of vengeance of our God.** " It may be noted that in the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus, in the opening of his ministry, read those verses which portray the character of his own message, but omits this jarring note (Luke 4 : 18, 19)." — *New Century Bible.* At the end of his ministry, however, he had much to say about this dread day of punishment for sin (Matt. 23–25). **To comfort all that mourn.** Not the sinners, who most should mourn, but those that mourn for sin and those that are weighed down by the unavoidable sorrows of life. All these latter are included by Christ in his second beatitude, " for they shall be comforted."

3. **To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion.** " To appoint " may mean the same as " to give " in the next clause, having the same object. The mourners are grieving *in* Zion and *for* Zion, sorrowing over the peril of Jerusalem and its temple. **To give unto them a garland for ashes.** " Garland " is literally " turban." The Jews scattered ashes on their heads as a sign of mourning and donned a bright turban on occasions of joy. These two words sound alike in the original, which a German translation imitates in " Putz statt Schmutz." **The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.** " Literally, a dimly-burning or flickering spirit." — *Rev. G. W. Wade, D. D.* " We have two contrasted pictures suggested : one of a mourner with gray ashes strewed upon his dishevelled locks, and his spirit clothed in gloom like a black robe ; and to him there comes One who, with gentle hand, smoothes the ashes out of his hair, trains a garland round his brow, anoints his head with oil and, stripping off the trappings of woe, casts about him a bright robe fit for a guest at a festival. That is the miracle that Jesus Christ can do for every one, and is ready to do for us, if we will let him." — *Alexander Maclaren.* **That they may be called trees of righteousness.** " Strictly, *terebinths* or *oaks*, as the symbols of perennial verdure, the righteousness being life-giving and enduring." — *Ellicott.* **The planting of Jehovah.** The righteousness which is to grow up in God's children is their own in the sense that they laid hold on it, accepted it, gladly made it their own, but only in that sense ; every child of God humbly and gratefully owns that whatever good is in him is the gift of Jehovah. **That he may be glorified.** " Nothing gives so much glory to God as the proved righteousness of his saints." — *Rawlinson.* And nothing gives so much joy to God's true children as to add — not to their own glory, but to his.

PROHIBITION APPLICATIONS. Prohibition is an integral part of Christ's gospel, his " good news." All over the world, in the slums and palaces of Europe as well as in the dark forests of Africa, strong drink is the deadliest foe of the gospel. Nothing that can be done just now would more rapidly advance Christianity than universal prohibition.

Strong drink finds its saddest and most deplorable victims in " the meek," — in mothers, sisters, wives, and little children, in the poor, the obscure, the weak, those for whom civilization should especially care, instead of letting loose upon them this raging tiger of alcohol. But the bright gospel of prohibition is the best of " good tidings " to the meek.

What has broken more hearts than strong drink ? The World War saw millions of noble young men hurled into cruel graves, but their mothers and wives, their sisters and children and sweethearts held their heads proudly while they mourned for them. Not so with the broken hearts that have mourned yearly, for milleniums, the millions of drunkards that have tottered into dishonored graves. Christ came to heal broken hearts, and the best way of healing is to remove the cause of the disease.

Strong drink has been the chief agent in filling our prisons and making necessary our police courts, poorhouses, and insane asylums. Prohibition is rapidly opening these places, emptying them, rendering them unnecessary. The testimony of hundreds of judges and chiefs of police in our great cities is on record proving that prohibition is ending much crime. Hundreds of jails have been closed for lack of inmates, with other places for the detention of criminals. Prohibition is proving to be a national purifier.

Prohibition, which brings such inestimable blessing and profit to the nation, is also " a day of vengeance " for the purveyors of poison, the men who for so many generations have done all they could to debauch our public and private life, who have

4. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.

---

fattened their purses on the woes of women and the eternal ruin of men. While we have forgiveness ready for them if they truly repent, let us waste no pity on them for the destruction of their infamous trade.

Into how many millions of homes has prohibition brought new hope and a forgotten peace! The curse of drunkenness had rested upon them like "a spirit of heaviness." Now the pall is lifted, and in its place is the garland of joy. Everywhere throughout our happy land sons, brothers, and fathers, freed from the awful temptation, are walking with steady footsteps and clear eyes and brain, are earning honest money and spending it in worthy ways. They that were on the way to become mere rotten logs, fallen in the swamp of sensualism, are now "trees of righteousness."

The first year of prohibition the exports of spirits from the United Kingdom to the United States fell off from 1,285,586 gallons to 60,710 gallons.

A justice of the peace and police judge of Grand Rapids, Mich., writes: "One of the chief benefits of prohibition is the elimination of the saloons as an organized political power. The greatest power for political corruption ended when John Barleycorn was outlawed. This alone would make prohibition worth while if there were no other benefits."

The satisfaction given by prohibition is reflected in the six State-wide prohibition campaigns conducted in Ohio during recent years. The vote was: 1914, wet majority, 85,000; 1915, wet majority, 55,000; 1917, wet majority, 1,137; 1918, dry majority 25,000; 1919, dry majority, 42,000; 1920, dry majority 290,000.

"Do you Americans know that the finest vital statistics in your history were those of six months of this last year, after prohibition came into effect?" — *Dr. C. W. Saleeby, the well-known British author and lecturer.*

The Tobacco Evil. As the United States became prohibition territory, the tobacco evil increased on account of the World War. There is no prospect of a Constitutional Amendment against it, but there is need of earnest agitation and thorough education. In four centuries the tobacco habit, beginning in America, has fastened itself on half the population of the world. Two million acres of American land are devoted to the cultivation of the noxious weed. Our annual tobacco bill is $20 *per capita*. One-third of our enormous fire losses is due to smoking. The number of cigarettes made in the United States has increased from 14,000,000,000 to 50,000,000,000 in the last six years. "Tobacco causes heart disease, disease of the nerves and mucous membrane, and diminishes the possibilities of recovery from any disease." — *Dr. Matthew Woods.* It weakens the heart, blurs the vision, dulls the mind. It is one of the most selfish of habits and is a social nuisance. Nicotine must follow alcohol into the limbo of outgrown follies.

II. **THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF PROHIBITION,** vs. 4–9. 4. **And they shall build the old wastes.** The cities of the Holy Land, laid waste by many wars, were to be rebuilt. "It was a ruin 'of many generations,' having commenced, probably, with the invasion of Pharaoh-Necho in B. C. 608, and being continued till the edict of Cyrus (B. C. 538)." — *Rawlinson.* Compare the work of rebuilding and restoration needed in France and Belgium after the World War. All this is typical of the destruction wrought by sin. Nothing is so wasteful as wickedness. **They shall raise up the former desolations.** The present movement of the Jews back to Palestine known as Zionism is part of the long fulfilment of this prophecy. **And they shall repair the waste cities.** We have just studied the partial fulfilment of this prophecy by Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. **The desolations of many generations.** No generation, as no man, lives to itself alone. We inherit from the past a vast store of good, which we enjoy; also a vast waste of evil, which we must repair.

5. **And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks.** During the exile the people performed these services for strangers, for the Assyrians and Persians. The time is coming, said Isaiah, when this condition shall be reversed. **And foreigners shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.** "God's Israel shall find those who were once employed to desolate the land ready to assist in its cultivation. Earthly power (once so adverse) shall give its aid to the Church." — *Speaker's Commentary.*

6. **But ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah.** At the birth of the Hebrew

6. But ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah ; men shall call you the ministers of our God : ye shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

7. Instead of your shame *ye shall have* double ; and instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their portion : therefore in their land they shall possess double ; everlasting joy shall be unto them.

8. For I, Jehovah, love justice, I hate robbery with iniquity ; and I will give them their recompense in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9. And their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples : all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed.

---

nation at Sinai (Ex. 19 : 6) God told the people that they were to be " a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Christ came to the Jews because they were the holiest of all races, the readiest to receive him. Will they ever rise in Christianity to the high privilege of this prophecy ? **Men shall call you the ministers of our God.** Not only the regularly appointed priests in the temple should serve God, but the laymen should vie with them in this service. **Ye shall eat the wealth of the nations.** An illustration was the wealth heaped upon the returned exiles, Ezra 1 : 6–11 ; 8 : 24–30. The most striking fulfilment of this prophecy is found in the spiritual successors of Israel, the great Christian nations, in which is now concentrated the chief wealth of the world, riches such as the world has never before seen or imagined. **And in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.** The marginal reading is, " To their glory shall ye succeed," " the exact idea being that Israel and the heathen shall 'exchange places,' the glory that now belongs to the latter being transferred to the former."—*Cambridge Bible.*

7. **Instead of your shame ye shall have double.** " The Jews are to be indemnified twofold for the suffering and shame which they have undergone." — *Westminster Commentary.* **And instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their portion.** The subject changes to the third person, but the Jews of the restoration are still intended ; their dishonorable lot is to be changed to a happy portion of all good — territory, houses, grain, gold. Best of all, God should be their portion forever (Ps. 73 : 26). **Therefore in their land they shall possess double.** Israel was to have twice as much land as before. **Everlasting joy shall be unto them.** These were not to be temporary blessings and they were not to fear that they might at some time be withdrawn. Their lot should be fixed in happiness.

8. **For I, Jehovah, love justice.** Because God is just, he will not allow the heathen to oppress his people forever. **I hate robbery with iniquity.** The people of God were robbed by the heathen in a most iniquitous way ; unjust taxes were laid upon them, their property was seized, they themselves were carried off into slavery. **And I will give them their recompense in truth.** God would truly repay them for all they had suffered. **And I will make an everlasting covenant with them,** renewing the ancient covenant made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David (Isa. 55 : 3).

9. **And their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples.** God's everlasting covenant should descend in blessings from father to children, and all the world should recognize the divine favor shown to God's people. **All that see them shall acknowledge them.** The position of God's people should not be a precarious one, but should be definitely understood and openly admitted. **That they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed.** The acknowledgement of God's people — their uprightness, their graciousness, their wisdom, power, and blessedness — is in effect an acknowledgment of God. He and his people cannot be separated in the world's estimation.

PROHIBITION APPLICATIONS. Prohibition in the United States is building " the old wastes." There are many " former desolations " to restore. The lives that have been destroyed, the characters that have been ruined, cannot, alas ! be restored. But the weakened constitutions can be rebuilt, the inherited tendencies to alcoholism can be eliminated in the course of generations, the mischief wrought by ages of strong drink can gradually be repaired. The money loss is the waste most easily and immediately made good. Alcohol cost the United States, directly and indirectly, two billion dollars a year. This enormous sum we are saving annually under prohibition.

If it were not for that, our country would have been dealt a staggering financial blow by the vast debts of the World War.

The superiority of the Jews to those of other nations, foretold by Isaiah, will certainly be fulfiled in the case of the United States if the other nations do not adopt prohibition. A drinking nation cannot compete with a prohibition nation commercially or in any other way.

The abolition of the saloon in America is one of the most signal triumphs of the justice that Jehovah loves. The God who hates robbery will finally drive out of business all these robbers and murderers. His vengeance shall fall upon every unrepentant maker of and dealer in the accursed stuff.

Make Prohibition World-Wide. As we write, news comes of the action of the Chilean Federation of Labor opposing the importation of liquor into Chile.

Also that the New Zealand mandate over Western Samoa is working out a complete suppression of the liquor traffic there.

Also that the great increase of open drunkenness in Japan is leading that country to consider seriously the wisdom of prohibition.

Also that New Zealand lacked at its last election only sixteen hundred votes of a prohibition majoirty, the prohibition vote increasing at each of the recent referenda.

At the time of writing, the liquor forces, forbidden to do their wicked work in the United States, have turned to China as furnishing a vast field for their operations. At the same time the civil war in China has made it easier for the opium trade to creep back. China is now the most important area for temperance activity.

An agreement made by the leading European nations in September, 1919, forbidding the introduction of " trade spirits " into a large part of Africa, was a great step in advance.

The need of prohibition in Europe if America is to be permanently for prohibition is shown by many statistics. Recently in Cleveland, O., out of 584 arrests in one month for violating the prohibition laws, 450 were aliens.

For the years 1906–1910 the countries in the order of alcohol-consumption per head stood in the following order : France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Switzerland, Portugal, Belgium, Argentine, Great Britain, Austria, Hungary, Germany, United States, Denmark, Australia, Serbia, Roumania, New Zealand, Sweden, Russia, Canada, Bulgaria, Norway, Japan, Finland. The range is from 5.04 Imperial gallons (France) to 1.51 (United States) and .33 (Finland). This indicates where temperance work is most needed.

During the year before the present writing, counting New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, 1,164,916 votes were cast in Canada for prohibition and only 640,606 against it.

Sir John Foster Fraser, a distinguished British journalist and traveler who is not himself a teetotaler, came to the conclusion, after visiting the United States, that " America is going to remain dry. I saw how healthy the people looked, how well the men, and particularly the women, carried themselves, how bonny the children were. Since my return I have been struck by the frequent sight of poor wan women, wretched and evidently ill-fed ; and the poor children with skimpy hair showing the lack of the proper kinds of food."

LESSON VI. — November 5.

JESUS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN. — Luke 4 : 31 — 5 : 39.

PRINT Luke 5 : 17–26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases.*—Matt. 8 : 17.

Devotional Reading : Isa. 63 : 7–14.
Reference Material : Matt. 9 : 35–38 ; Mark 1 : 21–45.
Primary Topic : How a Sick Man Was Brought to Jesus.
Lesson Material : Luke 5 : 17–26.
Memory Verse : And seeing their faith he said, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. Luke 5 : 20.
Junior Topic : Jesus Healing the Paralytic.
Lesson Material : Luke 5 : 17–26.
Memory Verse : Luke 5 : 24.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : Jesus' Power to Forgive Sin.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Jesus' Ministry to Human Need.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may be asked to read the lesson story over very carefully at home and make up their minds what were the feelings and thoughts of the palsied man at every step of the event. They are to put themselves in the place of one of the four friends and think it through from his viewpoint, and they are to imagine themselves the owner of the house, and one of the Pharisees, and John the beloved disciple, and think what each of these was thinking and saying and doing all through the event. Then they will be ready to tell the story from these different viewpoints in the class.

The Older Classes may listen to a paper read by one of the most thoughtful members of the class describing fully this typical day in Christ's life. Another member will read a paper telling the story of the healing of the paralytic in the character of the sick man himself or one of the other persons present. Then have a discussion, led by one of the members, on the forgiveness of sins, what is involved in it, who need it, how it is obtained, what are the proofs of it, and the results.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time.— May or June of A. D. 28, the second year of Christ's ministry.

Place.— Christ's "own city" of Capernaum, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The city of Capernaum.
Why Christ healed the sick.
Christ's varying manner of healing.
A comparison of the healing of the palsied man in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
The forgiveness of sins : what and how.
The nature and results of faith.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Jesus' Ministry to Human Need.

I. MANY DISEASES HEALED, Luke 4 : 31—5 : 16.
- A demoniac healed.
- A great fever cured.
- The great draught of fishes.
- A leper cleansed.
- Jesus the Helper of mankind.

II. THE PALSIED MAN HEALED, Luke 5 : 17–26.
- The four friends.
- The hole in the tiles.
- The forgiveness of sins.
- Bringing our friends to the Great Physician.

III. WHO NEEDS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN? Luke 5 : 27–39.
- Levi hears the call.
- The critical Pharisee
- The call of sinners.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Books on the miracles by Trench, Spurgeon, Lang, Taylor, Greenhough (and others), Bruce, Laidlaw, Hovey, Macdonald. Cox's *A Day with Christ*. *A Day in Capernaum*, by Delitzsch. Chapters on this miracle in Coyle's *The Church and the Times*, Maurice's *Sermons Preached in Country Churches*, Newman Smyth's *The Reality of Faith*, Burrell's *The Home Sanctuary*, MacGregor's *Into His Likeness*. Robinson's *Studies in Luke's Gospel*. On the structure of houses in Palestine, see Thomson's *The Land and the Book*.

I. MANY DISEASES HEALED, Luke 4 : 31—5 : 16. A DEMONIAC HEALED. Most of the events of our lesson took place in Capernaum, which means "the village of Nahum." It is now *Tell Hum*, "the mound of (Na) hum," and is only a heap of ruins, including the notable remains of a white marble synagogue, probably the very synagogue built by the Roman centurion whose servant Christ healed from a distance (Luke 7 : 1–10). Capernaum was a flourishing town, the focus of important roads to Phœnicia, Damascus, Jerusalem, the chief cities of Galilee, and the Mediterranean. Christ found it a suitable center of his work in Galilee and made it his headquarters, probably making Peter's house his home. At Capernaum he worked numerous miracles and preached some of his most wonderful sermons.

Luke gives us a very precious account of a full day of our Lord at Capernaum. It was the Sabbath, and opened with a discourse by Jesus in the synagogue, a sermon so different from the customary tedious citing of authorities and droning over precedents, so athrill with original power and vital authority, that it filled his auditors with delighted amazement. They had never heard a man who spoke as he spoke.

Nor was this divine authority confined to the spiritual realm. Christ used it to heal a demoniac in his audience, who had interrupted the sermon with loud outcries. This poor man was inhabited by an evil spirit, whom Christ bade to come out of him, which the demon did, throwing him down in parting convulsions.

Reverent scholars are divided in regard to the matter of demon-possession, some holding that in those times (as in many savage and heathen lands to-day) the powers of evil dwelt now and then as tenants in human bodies, sharing the tenement with the rightful occupant. Others believe that these were cases of insanity, attributed to the influence of demons by popular superstition, in which Christ with his human

limitations joined, or which he did not deem it his province to correct. Whichever theory we adopt, the miracle remains. It is quite as wonderful to heal an insane mind as to drive out a disembodied spirit.

A GREAT FEVER CURED. The next work recorded of this crowded day was the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law, who was suffering from "a great fever." Ancient doctors divided fevers into "great" and "little," and Luke, the physician, uses the former technical term. It is strange that the Roman Catholic church should require its clergy to be unmarried when its traditional founder, St. Peter, was married.

"The low-lying, marshy land of the plain of Gennesaret would readily engender malarious fever." — *New Century Bible.* It seems to have been a sudden attack, for Mark tells us that "immediately" they went to Jesus with the news. They expected him to heal her, though this is the first cure of the sort recorded by Luke, because he had already performed similar miracles which are recorded in Matthew. A gentle touch is Luke's record that Christ "stood over her," and the other evangelists say that he took her by the hand. At once the fever left her, and she proved the cure by ministering to the household according to her usual custom, for she was evidently an efficient housewife.

News travels fast in Eastern villages, and it is no wonder that these two miracles, worked in the same day, aroused the wildest hope among the sick of Capernaum. They waited until the setting of the sun ended the Sabbath and freed them from the host of Pharisaical restrictions, and then they crowded around the Great Physician with their sick, all of whom were healed. "This twilight scene of Jesus moving about with word and touch of healing among the sick and suffering, the raving and tortured crowd (Matt. 4 : 24), is one of the most striking in the Gospels, and St. Matthew quotes it as a fulfilment of Isa. 53 : 4." — *F. W. Farrar.*

THE GREAT DRAUGHT OF FISHES. The next episode in Luke's Gospel is not a healing of sick bodies, but a mending of bad fortune. To escape from the crowd which was pressing upon him so that by a touch they might be healed of their diseases, our Lord had been preaching from a boat which was pushed out a little on the Sea of Galilee. This boat belonged to Simon Peter, who with his brother Andrew was washing the draw-net, while their cousins, John and James, were mending the casting-nets. The four had worked hard all the previous night — night being the best time for fishing — but had caught nothing. Grieved at their disappointment, for he always wants labor to be richly rewarded, the Saviour advised Peter to try once more. This he did faint-heartedly, but with wonderful results, the nets bursting with an enormous catch, and their two boats sinking to the gunwales with the great multitude of fishes. The four fishers had before this, at John the Baptist's preaching on the banks of the Jordan, become believers in Christ. Now, moved by this miracle, they became his apostles, leaving their work and their possessions and following him.

A LEPER CLEANSED. Luke follows this meaningful incident with another miracle of healing, which took place (Matt. 8 : 1–4 ; Mark 1 : 40–45) immediately after the Sermon on the Mount, probably at the village at Hattîn. There was a man there afflicted with the hideous disease of leprosy, that covers one with foul sores, eats away fingers and toes and whole limbs, and makes the body a mass of corruption. Only Naaman, far back in Old Testament history, had been healed of leprosy by a miracle, so that this leper had glorious faith to believe that Jesus could cure this incurable disease. Nevertheless he came, with eager entreaties, flinging himself on his knees, worshiping Christ, and at last throwing himself on his face in an agony of supplication. "You *can* make me clean," he cried, "if you only *will*." "*I will*," answered the Great Physician. He, the Pure One, did not hesitate to break the law by touching the leper, and instantly the wonderful miracle was accomplished. The leper was bidden to tell no one, but the marvel could not be hidden. So large were the crowds that came thronging around Jesus that the Great Physician was obliged to retire into the wilderness, where, in a long season of communion with his Father, he gave praise for what had been accomplished and gained strength for still greater deeds and words.

JESUS THE HELPER OF MANKIND. See how many Jesus helped on that one day, and what a variety of need he met. There is no trouble that he cannot cure.

Jesus could not cure all the sick folk in the world : he did not come for that purpose. Sickness is sometimes the punishment of sin ; often it is a salutary warning. But Christ's miracles were samples, illustrations of the divine love and power, showing what he can do and will do whenever it is best and we come to him in the right way.

17. And it came to pass on one of those days, that he was teaching ; and there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who were come out of every village of Galilee and Judæa and Jerusalem : and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

18. And behold, men bring on a bed a man that was palsied : and they sought to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

19. And not finding by what *way* they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went up to the housetop, and let him down through the tiles with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

Is Jesus the Helper of *your* life ? Do you take all your troubles to him ? What experience have you had of his help ? What new experience of it will you seek ?

II. **THE PALSIED MAN HEALED,** vs. 17–26. " The story of the healing of the paralytic of Capernaum is one of the most striking and instructive in the Gospels. It is a very mine for riches." — *Rev. G. H. C. MacGregor.*

17. **And it came to pass on one of those days.** Probably not on the crowded day just described. **That he was teaching.** Not in the synagogue but in a private house (Mark 2 : 1), perhaps Peter's. **And there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by.** The " doctors " or " teachers " of the sacred law were the scribes. **Who were come out of every village of Galilee and Judæa and Jerusalem.** " What *they* came for we can only conjecture. It may be that they were sent to observe, and to report to those of their own class in their own districts what they should see or hear." — *William M. Taylor.* This may have been the beginning of the hostility which led to Christ's crucifixion. **And the power of the Lord** (God's power) **was with him to heal,** as is shown by what followed.

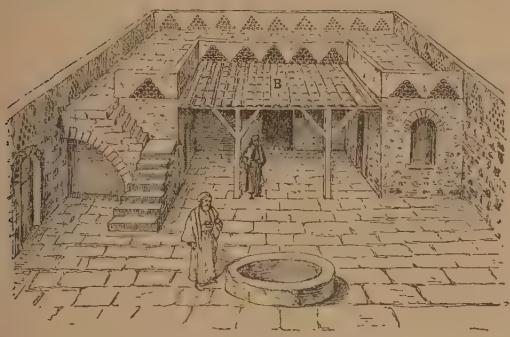
Upper Guest Chamber, Showing Stairs Leading to the Roof.

18. **And behold, men bring on a bed.** This bed was " merely a thickly padded quilt," such as is still used in Palestine. **A man that was palsied.** The Greek verb is the word that appears in English as our word paralysis, shortened to palsy. It is a disease of sudden onset, depriving its victim of the power of motion. " Paralysis is the only disease that actually welcomes pain as one of its encouraging symptoms. When there is feeling there is chance of recovery." — *Charles S. Robinson.* **And they sought to bring him in.** " One would like to know the names of these four good men, good neighbors, good friends — men whose faith was so great and bold. But we are not told what their names were. And there is some comfort for us even in that disappointing fact, for it suggests that Christ cares for men whose names the world has never heard, and never will hear." — *Samuel Cox.* **And to lay him before him.** They knew that Jesus had only to see the poor sufferer, and he would heal him.

19. **And not finding by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude.** Often to-day sinners are kept from Christ by the crowd — not the crowd that is seeking Christ, however, but the crowd that is busied with its own work and pleasure. We must think of our Lord as preaching in the court of the house — an open space,

20. And seeing their faith, he said, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

with an entrance from the street, and rooms around it on three sides opening into it. Part or the whole of it was roofed over. A fountain or a well may have been in the center of it. **They went up to the housetop.** "This was not so difficult, because commonly there was a flight of steps on the outside of the house, reaching to the roof; in addition to, or sometimes instead of, an internal communication of the same kind." — *Trench.* "Love will *creep*, but faith will *climb*, where it cannot go." — *Fuller.*



Court and Roof of an Oriental House.

In the paved courtyard we see the well, the flat roof, the rooms surrounding a court covered by a roof made of Oriental tiles. If Jesus was preaching in such a house he stood in the open recess at A. The audience filled not only the rooms but the whole court. The man was let down through the roof B in front of Jesus.

These outer stairs are of stone, very steep and narrow. It must have been hard to get the sick man up them, and a torture to the poor fellow thus to be tugged up the incline. Then he was laid down on the roof, perhaps in the blazing glow of the hot Eastern sun. **And let him down through the tiles with his couch.** The roofs of houses in Palestine are low and flat, and made of materials easily broken up and as easily restored: over the beams a layer of coarse matting or boards or stone slabs, sometimes merely short sticks close together covered with matted thorn-bush over which is a layer of stiff mortar and over that a layer of hard-packed earth. The beams are about three feet apart, so that the four men, each holding a corner of the bed, could easily lower their friend so that he could be received by others below and laid at the feet of Jesus.

"The bearers are unsteady. Racked and worn
With long disease, and clumsily upborne,
What is my anguish with their stumbling feet
And all the push and clamor of the street?
But any way, however rough it be,
O good Physician, if I get to thee!

"The crowd is great about thee. How they press,
Each in his own absorbing wretchedness,
Unheeding me, the sick man borne of four,
Halting despondent at the crowded door.
But any way, however thronged it be,
O good Physician, if I get to thee!

"The outer stairway is a hill of pain,
Torture of wasted form and beating brain,
Narrow and difficult and high and slow,
A demon's ladder to a mount of woe.
But any way, however steep it be,
O good Physician, if I get to thee!

"Upon the roof a glaring light is spread,
Blistering underneath and overhead.
They tear the tiles; the smarting dust is thick —
O men, ye four, be mercifully quick!
But any way, however hard it be,
O good Physician, if I get to thee!"
— *Amos R. Wells.*

Into the midst before Jesus. We can imagine the sudden interruption of our Lord's discourse by the noise of feet on the roof overhead and the tearing up of the roof. A choking cloud of dust falls over the company. The owner of the house — perhaps Peter — shouts indignantly: "Leave that roof alone!" John tries to shield the Master from the falling bits of earth. There is a square of dazzling light overhead. Almost instantly it is darkened with a descending bundle. The exclamations of the crowd are hushed as they see the pale face of the sufferer who is lowered at Christ's feet. Our Saviour's critics lean forward with intent scowls.

20. **And seeing their faith, he said.** The faith of the sick man, primarily; but "their" shows that the faith of the bearers was added to it, and was approved by Christ. "Faith was the condition for which Jesus waited before he could do any mighty work. Who can wonder at the rewards which may be given to the prayers of the faithful?" — *Bishop Lang.* **Man** (in Matthew and Mark, "Son"), **thy sins are forgiven thee.** In these words "we have a beautiful example of the way in which the

21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

22. But Jesus perceiving their reasonings, answered and said unto them, Why reason ye in your hearts?

23. Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?

24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (he said unto him that was palsied), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house.

Giver of all good things gives *before* we ask, and *better* than we ask." — *Trench.* The sufferer had asked nothing, except as his helpless condition was a petition. The Great Physician bestows on him a gift infinitely excelling the physical healing, and the basis on which the physical healing was to rest.

Illustration. Doubtless he knew — in that moment if not before — that his real sickness was sin. "You may remember how, in Wagner's great drama, the unveiling of the Holy Grail made the wound of Amfortas quiver again with sharpest pain. So the sick man in the presence of the Holy One felt the yet unhealed wound of the soul, the aching of the sense of unforgiven sin." — *Bishop Lang.*

Illustration. "It is recorded of Charles II. of England that in his last illness he had fourteen physicians. They bled and blistered, physicked and stimulated him in vain. Macaulay says, 'They tortured him like an Indian at the stake. And it was finally left for an autopsy to reveal what ailed him.' But Christ made no mistake in his diagnosis. He never attacked the symptoms of disease, but aimed directly at its seat; and he always cured." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

21. **And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason.** "Said within themselves" (Matthew); "reasoning in their hearts" (Mark). "If all the speeches that are made in the inner chambers of the soul became audible! If they were heard in home, in shop, and church, and market-place! In that case there would be sensations, and convulsions, and upheavals in society more thrilling and tragical than the books have ever recorded." — *Rev. Robert F. Coyle, D.D.* **Saying, Who is this that speaketh blasphemies?** "While Christ's consoling words were giving new life to the sick man, there were hidden in them for him who spoke them the germs of death." — *Delitzsch.* **Who can forgive sins, but God alone?** Certainly, no one; they were right thus far.

22. **But Jesus perceiving their reasonings.** All thoughts are open to him as clearly as if expressed in words. **Answered and said unto them, Why reason ye in your hearts?** Emphasize the *why?* Not the reasoning was wrong, but the critical spirit back of the reasoning.

23. **Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee.** This, though not easier to do, was easier to say, because any falsifier might say it and not get found out. "The physical miracle followed easily and naturally upon the diviner power of God's love which Jesus was conscious of possessing and exercising over the might of evil." — *Newman Smyth.* **Or to say, Arise and walk?** Of course, the mere saying of this, with no power back of the words, would instantly be discovered to be a cheat.

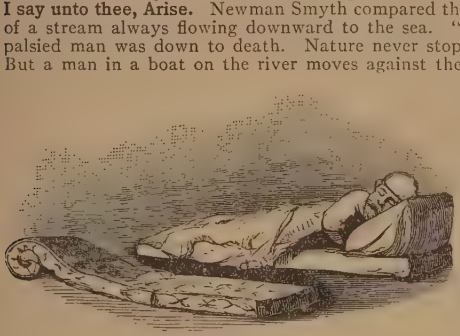
24. **But that ye may know.** "The miracle was not done only for the sake of the palsied man, though it was done for his sake. It was done for those who were sitting around. It was even for our sakes who are reading it to-day." — *F. D. Maurice.* **That the Son of man.** Christ's favorite name for himself, the name oftenest on his lips. He chose it because of its use in the Psalms and very often in Ezekiel and Daniel, to picture the prophet, and to foretell the Messiah (see especially Dan. 7 : 13, 14). Besides, it expresses the great truth that he was typical man, perfect man, as well as the fulness of the Godhead, thus bringing God and man together in a single life. The name "gave expression to his sense of connection with all men in sympathy, fortunes, and destiny." — *James Stalker.* **Hath authority on earth to forgive sins.** Only God could forgive sins, and only God could heal at a word. "If only God can do either, he who can do the one must be able to do the other." — *George Macdonald.* And it is done *on earth* and now; we do not need to wait till we get to heaven to have our sins forgiven. (**He said unto him that was palsied.**) "Divine gifts are more easily received when the very atmosphere of the place is receptive; but one in the crowd may get virtue from Christ, though all the rest shut their hearts against it.

25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his house, glorifying God.

26. And amazement took hold on all, and they glorified God ; and they were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

Here was a saving act done in an atmosphere of unbelief." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough*

I say unto thee, Arise. Newman Smyth compared the course of nature to the course of a stream always flowing downward to the sea. "The course of nature for that palsied man was down to death. Nature never stops and turns back upon itself." But a man in a boat on the river moves against the current, up the stream, away from the sea. "A miracle would be impossible if nature had to work it," but Christ, who fashioned the order of nature, was above it and had authority over it. **And take up thy couch.** This would be an added proof of his full restoration. "For a time we may still have to carry with us the bed on which we once lay ; that is, we may still bear about in us the enfeebling traces and restraints of past sins ; but, if our sins are in very deed forgiven, we shall not murmur ; the bed will be no unendurable burden to us, so strong and joyful will be our hearts : we shall not grow weary of the path we are commanded to take, for we love him whom we serve, and the path leads home." — *Samuel Cox.* **And go unto thy house.** How tender is Christ both of the sufferer and his dear ones. The sick man was not to be subjected to the cross-examination and threats of Christ's critics, and his own family had suffered the most from his malady and would rejoice most heartily in his recovery.



Man on Mattress.

Illustration. "It was much like Elijah's act on Mount Carmel, when he said to the assembled throng, 'The God who answereth by fire, let him be the God.' Christ would not ask them to believe without evidence, but he gave the evidence, that their faith might have a rational ground on which to rest." — *William M. Taylor.*

25. **And immediately he rose up before them.** "The numbness began to loosen ; the muscles began to show life ; feeling and the power to move returned ; and when he felt that his members, which heretofore had been without feeling and motion, were again obedient to his will, he raised himself up, astonished at himself, little by little, and with increasing self-confidence, until he finally stood erect before him, and, stretching out his hands to Jesus, sank upon his knees, and worshiped him." — *Delitzsch.* "Christ gives men a belief in themselves. Every word that Christ speaks spells hope. Christ gives men new strength enough to do things which at the first thought of them seem well-nigh impossible. Napoleon used to say that he could not find the word 'impossible' in his dictionary. There is no word 'impossible' in the dictionary which God has written for us." — *Rev. J. G. Greenhough.* **And took up that whereon he lay.** "There is a deep symbolic meaning in the man who had been forgiven rising from his bed in the fulness of restored energy and going forth before them all. The freedom of his arising and going upon his way was the outward and visible sign of the inward grace of forgiveness which had been bestowed upon him." — *Bishop Lang.* Forgiveness of the ugly past ushers us into a future of beautiful service. **And departed to his house.** What rejoicings and gratitude of wife and children must have received him there ! **Glorifying God.** The faith that had led Christ to cure him, led to this thanksgiving to God. He knew that only divine power could have worked the cure.

26. **And amazement took hold on all.** "Amazement" is the Greek word "ecstasy" : they were driven "out of their senses" with astonishment. **And they glorified God.** The friends and neighbors of the restored man certainly joined in his thanksgiving. **And they were filled with fear.** Possibly this refers to those that had

come to the meeting with suspicion in their hearts, ready to criticise. *Whom* had they been about to condemn? **Saying, we have seen strange things to-day.** "And yet Capernaum had to be brought down to hell, and no man can tell the place where it stood." — *George Macdonald.* Scholars, that is, contend over more than one heap of ruins, unable to prove definitely which is the ruin of Capernaum; all in accordance with Christ's prediction (Matt. 11 : 23, 24).

BRINGING OUR FRIENDS TO THE GREAT PHYSICIAN. "We are called to live in the power of the Master. A real Christian is so much character-force for the healing of life. If you, who are still young, wish to count for something in the world, you may find in the Master's name and Spirit the secret and source of power." — *Newman Smyth.*

"We claim that we have heard the Divine voice saying, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'; but the world says, 'If you wish us to believe, show the reality of your forgiveness by living a holy life.' If your Christ cannot give you power to walk, we suspect he is deceiving you when he claims to forgive." — *Rev. G. H. C. MacGregor.*

"Pardon is sealed by power."—*Prof. John Laidlaw, D.D.* As Christ forgives us, we not only have power over our own sins, but we have power over others to bring them to the Saviour. A true Christian is an evangelist.

There are many ways of bringing others to Christ: by public speech, by printed words (our own or others'), by letters, by personal appeal, by prayer. It is a great help to associate ourselves with others, as the four friends combined to carry the sick man whom no one of them could have carried alone. Thus Christ sent his disciples out two by two. Have you your evangelistic partner?

III. WHO NEEDS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN? Luke 5 : 27–39. LEVI HEARS THE CALL. It is surprising to note that only two verses are given in the Gospels to the important apostle Matthew, the author of the first Gospel. This is only one of many illustrations of the singleness of purpose of the New Testament, wholly devoted to setting forth Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men.

C. Schonherr.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

"Matthew," like Nathaniel, Theodore, Doritheus, and Adeodatus, means "the gift of God." It seems to have been the name chosen by him after his call, his original name being Levi. He was one of the hated publicans or tax-gatherers, probably levying taxes at Capernaum on the traffic of the Sea of Galilee. He may have been a cousin of Jesus, and at any rate his business, bringing him into contact with travelers, would inform him fully of Christ's doings and sayings. Therefore our Lord's summons, "Follow me," was probably not a sudden call. Indeed, many earnest conversations between the two may have preceded it.

But Matthew's acceptance of the call was sudden and complete. He abandoned his tax-booth by the highway, he closed his account books, and left his job to any one that wanted it. The only thing he carried into his new life was the habit of keeping systematic records, a skill which he used gloriously for the world in penning the first Gospel.

THE CRITICAL PHARISEES. The call of Matthew fits perfectly into our lesson because at the great feast which the converted publican made to celebrate the great event some scribes and Pharisees, entering out of curiosity with the freedom of the Orient, found fault with Jesus for eating with publicans and sin-

ners. Then the Saviour uttered the noble saying, "*They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"

The Call of Sinners. If we are not sinners, and know ourselves to be, Christ has no message or meaning for us. Christ raps at every door: "Does a sinner live here? I have come to see *him*."

Christ's call is to repentance, but that is the first step away from sin and toward himself. "Sin no more" was his command, as emphatic as that of John the Baptist.

Do we say that we cannot stop sinning? The paralytic's power to obey Christ came as he started to obey him. Jesus says to us, 'Give up this bad habit.' We say, 'Lord, I cannot.' That is unbelief and disobedience. The trouble is not 'I cannot,' but 'I will not.'" — *Rev. G. R. C. MacGregor.*

Christ's great call to sinners offers the forgiveness of their sins. "I have heard of one who, having been under a great sense of sin and being relieved of it, could for a long time only cry out, 'He is a great Forgiver.' When there were other things to be attended to, he could not see to them, nor speak of any other kind of business but this, 'He is a great Forgiver.'" — *C. H. Spurgeon.*

God grant that, as a result of this lesson, many thousands will go to the Great Forgiver, the Physician of souls.

LESSON VII. — November 12.

JESUS THE GREAT TEACHER. — Luke 6 : 1–49.

PRINT vs. 27–38.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*** — Luke 6 : 31.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 119 : 9–16.
Reference Material : Matt. 5 : 1–18; John 3 : 2; 6 : 68; 7 : 46; Col. 2 : 3.
Primary Topic : Jesus Teaching Us to Love Everybody.
Lesson Material : Luke 6 : 35–38.
Story Material : 1 Sam. 26.
Memory Verse : Let us love one another. 1 John 4 : 7.
Junior Topic : Living by the Golden Rule.
Lesson Material : Luke 6 : 27–38.
Memory Verse : Luke 6 : 31.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : The Golden Rule in Everyday Life.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Jesus Teaching Us How to Live Together.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may be asked to go over the lesson carefully at home and write down for each verse of the lesson, as far as they can, some application to daily life. They will ask themselves, "How can this be carried out in my home? in school? on the playground?" Then they will give these applications in the class.

The Older Classes will make a broad study of Luke's report of the Sermon on the Mount under two heads, each of which will be discussed by some one especially appointed, and then debated by all the class. These heads are: Christ's way of teaching; Present-day applications of Christ's precepts, especially the Golden Rule.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : The Golden Rule in Everyday Life.

I. Teachings about the Sabbath and Blessedness, vs. 1–26.
In the field of grain.
The man with the withered hand.
Christ's pupil-teachers.
The Beatitudes.

II. Teachings about Love and Helpfulness, vs. 27–38.
How to treat enemies.
How to respond to petitions.
The Golden Rule.
Judge not.
Give good measure.

III. Teachings about Humility and Fruit-Bearing, vs. 39–49.
The mote and beam.
The tree and its fruit.
The parable of the two foundations.
Jesus the Great Teacher.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The Sermon on the Mount was preached in midsummer of A. D. 28, in the second year of Christ's ministry.

Place. — Probably the Horns of Hattîn, a hill seven miles southwest of Capernaum.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and Luke.
The Sabbath according to the Pharisees and Christ.
Social applications of the Beatitudes.
Social applications of the Golden Rule.
What is the underlying thought of Christ's teachings?
What was unique in Christ's manner of teaching?

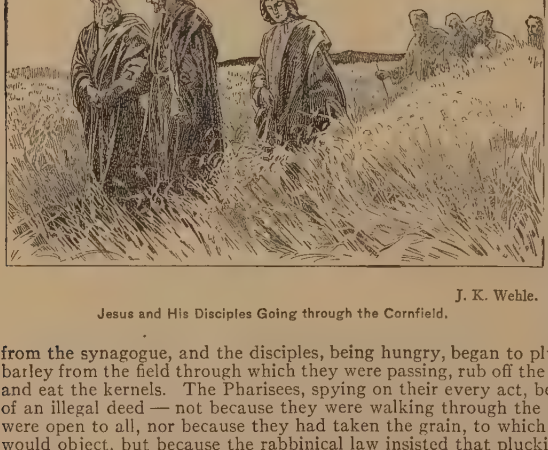
THE LESSON IN ART.

The healing of the man with the withered hand has been illustrated by John Van Orley, Bida, Tissot. The Sermon on the Mount was painted by Fra Angelico (Florence), Cosimo Rosselli (Sistine Chapel, Rome), Parmigiano, Peter Brueghel, Claude Lorraine (London), Lebrun, Fritz von Uhde, and drawn by Bida.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

On the Beatitudes: Moberly's *Sermons on the Beatitudes*, Miller's *The Master's Blesseds*, Washburn's *The Beatitudes and Other Sermons*. Johnston's *The Beatitudes of Christ*, Fisher's *The Beatitudes* (in *The Short Course Series*), Meyer's *Blessed Are Ye*, Hodge's *The Year of Grace, Advent to Trinity*, Ainsworth's *The Heart of Happiness*, Dykes's *Beatitudes of the Kingdom*, Amos R. Wells's *Happiness Haven*, a recent book by Canon Masterman, *Aspects of Christian Character*, etc. On the Sermon on the Mount, Gesner's *The Life Worth Living*, McAfee's *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Gore's *The Sermon on the Mount*, Genung's *The Magna Charta of the Kingdom of God*, Boyd Carpenter's *The Great Charter of Christ*, Charles R. Brown's *The Master's Way*, etc. *What did Jesus Teach?* by Graves.

I. TEACHINGS ABOUT THE SABBATH AND BLESSEDNESS, vs. 1–26. IN THE FIELD OF GRAIN. In this chapter Luke gives us a record of some of the gracious words and deeds of the early ministry of our Lord. His teachings with regard to the Sabbath were of great importance in the history because they aroused the most bitter opposition of the Pharisees, who had weighted down the day of rest and worship with innumerable petty restrictions on which they insisted fiercely. No food could be eaten (except in case of sickness) before the morning service in the synagogue. Jesus and his disciples were on their way to or from the synagogue, and the disciples, being hungry, began to pluck ears of wheat or barley from the field through which they were passing, rub off the chaff in their hands, and eat the kernels. The Pharisees, spying on their every act, began to accuse them of an illegal deed — not because they were walking through the field, for such paths were open to all, nor because they had taken the grain, to which in that land no one would object, but because the rabbinical law insisted that plucking the ears of grain was a kind of reaping, and rubbing them in their hands was a kind of threshing, and reaping and threshing were work and therefore forbidden on the Sabbath!



J. K. Wehle.

Jesus and His Disciples Going through the Cornfield.

Christ's answer was a reference to the story told in 1 Sam. 21 : 1–6, how David, pursued by Saul, took on the Sabbath the bread from the Holy Place of the tabernacle, that he might preserve his followers and himself,— and that though only the priests had a right to eat the bread. Further, Christ reminded them that the law itself required the priests to work in the temple all through the Sabbath, which was to them the busiest day of the week. "In this place," said our Lord, "is one greater than the temple. *The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.*"

This saying is the foundation of the Christian's Sabbath. It is a day set apart for our good by our Maker. Established by his authority, it is to be observed in his spirit. Whatever he would have us do or not do on that day we are to do or refrain from doing. His will is to be our guide, on the Sabbath as on all the other days of the week.

THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND. On another Sabbath Jesus was in the synagogue. He evidently went to church every Sabbath. As, when he was twelve years old, he expressed surprise that any one should expect to find him elsewhere than in his Father's house, so it was all through his life. He taught a Sabbath of freedom, but freedom *in*, not *from*, the ordinary observances of religion.

On this Sabbath, and in the synagogue, he gave an illustration of the proper use of the day by healing a poor fellow whose right hand was shrunken and shrivelled, the result of accident or disease. It is the tradition that he was a mason, and of course he could not work. The scribes and Pharisees were watching Christ, to see whether he would break the law by healing on the Sabbath, there being no special emergency. Knowing their thoughts, he indignantly asked them (Matt. 12 : 11, 12) if they would not pull a sheep out of a pit if it fell in on the Sabbath, "and how much better is a man than a sheep!" So he healed the poor withered hand, and did it with a word, so that his critics had no case against him : he could not be condemned for merely speaking.

Bida.

The Man with the Withered Hand.

The Pharisees went forth "filled with madness," and plotted with the Herodians (Mark 3 : 6) to destroy him. Nevertheless, Christ had given a lasting example of the true Sabbath-keeping, which consists in whatever makes life happier, stronger, and holier. The incident also illustrates Christ's manner of teaching — bold, direct, concise, and vitalized by concrete illustrations.

THE PUPIL-TEACHERS. A notable characteristic of Jesus as a teacher was that he did not teach alone. Like all great teachers, such as Socrates, Paul, Agassiz, he surrounded himself with pupils who were to become teachers in their turn. These pupils were very numerous. We are not told how many there were, but we know the names of an inner circle of twelve. These twelve were for the most part men of the people, like Jesus himself. A large proportion of them were fishers. One of them had exercised the despised calling of a tax-collector. Four of them were to become writers of New Testament books, and one of these four was to write the most wonderful book in the world. All but one — Judas — came from Galilee.

The Great Teacher trusted in the capacity of average men. He knew that they could receive and understand the most profound truths and could be moved to present them convincingly to others. On that belief Christ built his church, which always has appealed first and most strongly to common men. Christianity has founded universities, has been the chief promoter of education and civilization, but has won its triumphs without much aid from scholars or from the rich and powerful, through the might of its faith and love.

THE BEATITUDES. The remainder of the chapter is Luke's report of the Sermon on the Mount, given more fully in Matt. 5–7. This great address was spoken on an unknown mountain in Galilee, tradition says the Horns of Hattîn, a square-shaped hill with two tops two or three miles from the Lake and seven miles southwest of Caper-

27. But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,

28. Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.

---

naum. "Of all the teachings of the New Testament the sayings of this Sermon on the Mount have perhaps carried the most universal conviction with them." — *Rev. George F. Genung, D.D.* "The Sermon on the Mount is the moral law of the kingdom of Christ. It occupies in the New Testament the place which in the Old Testament is occupied by the Ten Commandments." — *Bishop Gore.*

The opening of this incomparable sermon is the most wonderful part of it, the eight Beatitudes, or Blesseds. Recognizing happiness as the aim of the universal search, our Guide shows us the way to it. It is one straight road, but, like many other roads, it has different names in different parts of it.

1. *The Way of Poverty* — often poverty in this world's goods, always lowliness of spirit; "not the men who crawl, but the men conscious and mindful of their spiritual necessities." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.* It leads to a throne and an eternal kingdom, the glorious kingdom of heaven.

2. *The Way of Hunger.* Often literal hunger, always spiritual hunger for the best things. "The *nardoo* plant of Australia closely resembles flour, but lacks the nutritive property, and those who feed on it, though insensible of hunger, after a few weeks die of starvation." — *F. B. Meyer.* But Christ is the Bread of Life, and those that hunger for him find perfect and endless satisfaction.

3. *The Way of Tears.* All men find this road, though not all find the blessedness at the end of it. "They who mourn, and have the balm of God's comfort poured on their souls, they are blessed." — *Prof. Cleland B. McAfee, D.D.* All their mourning shall be turned into laughter.

4. *The Way of Persecution.* "If we would understand what being 'persecuted' meant when Jesus spoke of it, we should read the eleventh chapter of 2 Corinthians, with its breathless record of the sufferings of St. Paul. Every other leader of men, who has had a heart at all, has grieved over the distress which he was bringing upon his friends even in a good cause. Mazzini deplored the desolation and sorrow which the glorious struggle for freedom was to spread over Italy." — *Rev. R. H. Fisher, D.D.* Every true Christian must bear his cross, and in so doing he comes closest to the Great Cross-bearer.

The other four Beatitudes, pointing out the Ways of Meekness, Mercy, Purity, and Peace, are not given by Luke, but instead four woes corresponding to the four Beatitudes: woe to those that are rich now, that are full now, that laugh now, those of whom all men speak well; for in the time to come they will not be with Christ, since they have not walked his ways on earth.

"We need not go hunting for crosses; but we must not evade them, if they come." — *Rev. Howard Agnew Johnston, D.D.* "If we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with him. No truth is taught more clearly in the New Testament than that losses met in serving Christ in this world will have their abundant compensation in the life of heaven." — *J. R. Miller.* "Unless the moral ideals of Jesus are as valid to-day as when first they were spoken, Christianity is not what it claims to be, and we must turn wearily to the task of building up an ethical ideal with only self-interest and expediency to guide us." — *Canon J. H. B. Masterman.*

II. **TEACHINGS ABOUT LOVE AND HELPFULNESS,** vs. 27–38. 27. **But I say unto you that hear.** "A peculiar phrase, awakening attention to an apparent paradox, and requiring that attention if what follows is to be understood." — *New Century Bible.* **Love your enemies.** The Old Testament commanded kindness to enemies, as in Ex. 23 : 4; Prov. 25 : 21; but it also in numerous cases commanded hatred of enemies (Deut. 7 : 2; 23 : 6; Ps. 137 : 8, 9, etc.). Christ leaves no room for hate. **Do good to them that hate you.** Paul, in Rom. 12 : 17–21, showed how beautifully this precept had seized upon him.

28. **Bless them that curse you.** Injury by words is more likely to arouse our wrath than even injury by deeds, and it is hard indeed to return blessings for cursings; but a Christian will do it. **Pray for them that despitefully use you.** "The Greek word implies the coarsest insults." — *Cambridge Bible.* Never was this precept so wonderfully illustrated as by Jesus himself, praying on the cross for his murderers; and by Stephen, who followed his blessed example (Luke 23 : 34; Acts 7 : 60).

29. To him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other ; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also.

30. Give to every one that asketh thee ; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32. And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye ? for even sinners love those that love them.

---

29. **To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other.** " Smiteth " is in the Greek a word denoting a violent blow, not a mere slap on the face. " To take this literally would be grotesque and the action mere buffoonery. Jesus expects us to understand him with some imagination and common sense. The principle of non-resistance is illustrated by the example of an extreme instance ; this is the very opposite of hitting back." — *Prof. Walter F. Adeney.* **And from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also.** The cloak is the outer garment, the coat the inner garment, the tunic or shirt. " What becomes of lawsuits over cloaks, if the other party says, ' Here, take my coat also ' ? Given this spirit and the case is settled out of court." — *Rev. Herbert M. Gesner.*

30. **Give to every one that asketh thee.** " There is no hint of absurd or foolish or weakening charity. What is asked may be withheld out of regard to the man who asks it. It is not to be withheld selfishly." — *Prof. Cleland B. McAfee, D.D.* " Give to every one that asks, but not everything he asks." — *St. Augustine.* **And of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.** This does not mean that thieves may not be required to make restitution. The best interests of the thieves and the safety of society require this, as a general thing. But we are always to be ready for the exceptions at the demand of Love.

Illustration. In Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* " Jean Valjean steals the silver plate from the Bishop. He has no right to it, unless on the ground that it belonged to the poor as the dear old man declared. But when they bring Jean Valjean in, arrested for stealing, the old Bishop totters over to the mantelpiece and gives him the two candlesticks, saying, ' These are yours, too ; why did you not take them ? ' And you love him for it. He has gone beyond any possible claim on him. Moreover, it is the salvation of the ex-convict." — *Professor McAfee.*

31. **And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.** The common consent of mankind counts this the Golden Rule, as superior to all others. It is found elsewhere in a much inferior negative form ; for example, in Tobit 4 : 15, " What you yourself hate, do to no man " ; or the saying of Confucius : " Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself." " The negative confines us to the region of *justice ;* the positive take us into the region of *generosity* or *grace.*" — *Expositor's Greek Testament.* " If any man thinks the Golden Rule a simple matter, let him put it to himself in this way : Am I the kind of man that I think every man ought to be ? Suppose everybody became like me in spirit, would this, then, be the kind of world that would be the very best that men can make it ? That is the Golden Rule." — *Prof. Cleland B. McAfee, D.D.*

THE GOLDEN RULE in EVERYDAY LIFE. It calls for much praise and very little fault-finding. It bids us pay bills and wages promptly. How about delayed replies to letters ? How about criticisms of the preacher's sermon ? The Golden Rule commands a thousand little courtesies and helpfulnesses in the home, on trains, in shops, on the street, in school. Are we obedient to its commands ? What is the relation of the Golden Rule to the bargain counter ? to goods made in sweatshops ? to underpaid labor ? The Golden Rule would solve the servant question. The Golden Rule would solve the labor problem. The Golden Rule would put an end to war. The Golden Rule has ended the saloon in this country. Does the Golden Rule apply to politics ? to international relations ? Is it possible to observe the Golden Rule in business ? Show that Christianity stands or falls with the Golden Rule.

32. **And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye ?** " Thank " is literally " favor " — what favor of God or man will reward you ? You will only be doing what you cannot help doing. **For even sinners love those that love them.** Thieves will stick together from motives of protection and self-interest ; bad men

33. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye ? for even sinners do the same.

34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye ? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.

35. But love your enemies, and do *them* good, and lend, never despairing ; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High : for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.

36. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37. And judge not, and ye shall not be judged : and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : release, and ye shall be released :

38. Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

---

will often love their wives and children passionately, and be loved by them. The most savage and cruel beasts will show mutual affection.

33. **And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye ?** " What credit is that to you ? " Professor Moffatt translates. **For even sinners do the same.** So far as they do good at all, it is done to those that benefit them and not to their enemies.

34. **And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye ?** The reference is to lending at interest, expecting to receive back the principal and get the interest also. That is business, not generosity. **Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.** " For the evil lend to the evil, to receive as muckle again." *Rev. William Wye Smith's " Braid Scots " New Testament.*

35. **But love your enemies, and do them good.** There are two common Greek verbs for love, one of them signifying the affection of instinct, the other the affection of reason ; the latter verb is used here. **And lend, never despairing.** The participle used here seems to have been a term often used by physicians when they gave up their patients as lost. The Christian is never to do this. **And your reward shall be great.** Just what our reward shall be is not specified, but we have entire confidence in the Rewarder. **And ye shall be the sons of the Most High.** Illustrating in your lives the characteristics of your heavenly Father. **For he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.** Matt. 5 : 45 beautifully illustrates this with God's sun and rain, which he sends equally upon the evil and the good.

36. **Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.** Matthew (5 : 48) says that we are to become perfect, as our Father is perfect. The thought is not essentially different, as God is " the Father of mercies " (2 Cor. 1 : 3), and if we are as merciful as God is we shall come very close to perfection.

37. **And judge not, and ye shall not be judged.** The office of a judge is one of the highest and most responsible on earth. A true judge must know the law and thoroughly understand men ; he must be impartial and must have no thought of self. Some men are called to be judges, and the laws must be administered ; also it is necessary for all of us to form opinions of other men in order that we may be on our guard against the evil, help those that need help, and praise those that deserve praise. But we are forbidden to be censorious, to seek out the evil in others for our own gratification, and to judge at all except in sympathy and love.

Illustration. " To judge another is to give our own standard. A painter was painting a house. The master of the house, thinking that it might lend to the painter's pleasure to see a fine oil painting, asked him to step in and view the portrait. The painter did so ; and as he stood viewing it with critical eye the owner said, ' That picture cost five hundred dollars.' ' Goodness ! ' exclaimed the painter, ' there's not ten dollars' worth of paint on it ! ' " — *Rev. Herbert M. Gesner.*

And condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. God is eager to avoid condemning ; this is an illustration of the merciful spirit of God, which we are exhorted to possess. We are not to condemn others, if we do not want to be condemned by God. **Release, and ye shall be released.** The opposite of condemning, that is, of throwing others into prison, literally or metaphorically.

38. **Give, and it shall be given unto you.** We are not to give in order to receive,

but in order to help ; nor are we to give when the gift would not help. " The saintly William Law seems to have distributed as much as $12,500 a year, chiefly in dole to applicants who came into his back yard ; he succeeded in getting rid of his money, and in demoralizing the neighborhood. Indiscriminate charity is not enjoined, but a self-sacrificing generosity is. Let our whole conduct make it evident that we welcome and do not resent claims either on our purse, or on our heart, or on our intelligence." — *Bishop Gore.* **Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom.** " Pockets were unknown to the ancients. All that was necessary was carried in the fold of the robe or in the girdle." — *Cambridge Bible.* **For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.** " Some men always have something to be dissatisfied about. They suspect everybody, and where they suspect they find." — *Rev. George F. Genung, D.D.* But the hopeful, patient, cheerful, and loving people find themselves in a sunny, kindly, and honest world.

III. **TEACHINGS ABOUT HUMILITY AND FRUIT-BEARING,** vs. 39–49. THE MOTE AND BEAM. The Sermon on the Mount ends in a series of vivid parables most of them condensed into single sentences. The first has to do with eyesight. The heat and dust of the East, with its neglect of sanitation, produce an appalling amount of blindness. Blind men are everywhere, and sometimes one scarcely less blind than another will be found leading him. Palestine is also full of unfenced wells, cisterns, old quarries and pits, into which the blind are liable to fall. " Be not blind guides," our Lord urges on his followers as on another occasion he charged the Pharisees with being the same (Matt. 23 : 16, 17). We are not to go around trying to pick little grains of dust out of other people's eyes while all the time we are carrying a big beam of wood in our own eye. It is a fine example of the occasional comic exaggeration with which Christ enforced his truths, doubtless with smiling lips and a twinkle in his eye. This little parable serves to illustrate what Christ had just said in deprecation of censoriousness.

THE TREE AND ITS FRUIT. Following this thought, that the Christian should see first that his own life is right, the Teacher illustrates the truth by the natural law that like produces like. Figs come from fig-trees, grapes from grape-vines. If we want a fruitful life, we must get a fruit-bearing heart. If we are rich inside, we shall be able to hand out treasure to the world. If our brain is well furnished, our mouths will give forth wisdom. There is absolutely no way to get out of life anything that we do not put into life in essence, in the seed.

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO FOUNDATIONS. Again Christ illustrates this truth of the invariable nature of consequences. Palestine is a land of rocks, which are not far from the surface. Houses there reach down with their foundations to the solid rock, and last for ages. Palestine also, to the east and west of its central ridge, is a land of deep gullies and ravines which are dry in dry weather, or only supplied with trickling streams, but in the wet season the most violent torrents rush along them, bearing everything before them, uprooting trees and even carrying along huge rocks. Such, says Christ, is the life that is not founded on the rock of a noble, unselfish character. Christ's words and spirit are the solid rock : build there, and you are safe ; build elsewhere, and the storms of life will tear your flimsy structure to pieces and bear it down to ruin.

JESUS THE GREAT TEACHER. Christ is called " Teacher " nearly fifty times in the Gospels, and there are about two hundred allusions to his teaching. He spent most of his time in teaching, and he taught wherever he happened to be. He was fitted for teaching by his bodily vigor, his Bible training, his human sympathies, his wide knowledge of men and things, and above all by the presence with him of God's Holy Spirit. His beautiful life of devotion and sacrifice perfectly illustrated his precepts. " Surely no person in history was ever better fitted than Jesus to perform a great educational service." — *Dean Frank P. Graves, Ph.D.* He was the ideal Teacher of all times.

His methods of teaching were manifold and in many ways unique. He was master of the parable, of illustration. He was a marvelous maker of proverbs, of maxims. His truths went straight home to consciences, they touched the deepest needs, they rose to the highest summits of faith. So wonderfully did this Carpenter of Nazareth teach that his words outshine all literature. No other teacher has inspired so many books, so great art and architecture and music. Our lesson illustrates some of the elements of his teaching and other elements will be brought out in later lessons. The most powerful element of all, of course, was his incomparable life.

LESSON VIII. — November 19.

JESUS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS. — Luke 7.

PRINT vs. 37–48.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.* — 1 TIM. 1 : 15.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 51 : 1–10.
Reference Material : Luke 15 : 1–32.
Primary Topic : JESUS LOVES EVERYBODY.
Lesson Material : Luke 7 : 36–50. Print vs. 37–48.
Memory Verse : He is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Luke 6 : 35.
Junior Topic : JESUS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.
Lesson Material : Luke 7 : 36–50. Print vs. 37–48.
Memory Verse : Luke 5 : 32.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.
Topic for Young People and Adults : JESUS' HELP FOR THE SINFUL AND SORROWFUL.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will enjoy making small pasteboard models of an ancient banqueting-table and couches. Each pupil may make one, or the class may be divided into groups, each group to work in partnership on a single model. Also some of the class may form in clay little models of the ancient alabaster ointment flasks. The younger pupils will be told of the woman as a poor woman on whom the Pharisees looked down, but who had been greatly helped by Christ's preaching and wanted to show her gratitude in the best way she could. She gave her best. Show the pupils how they may give their best to Christ in return for all he has given them.

The Older Classes will survey all of this rich chapter under the general subject of Christ's ministry to human needs. Assign to different members of the class the various sections of the chapter, asking each to bring out the present-day applications. The great question of the right treatment of sinners and of the unfortunate classes comes up in this lesson. Obtain, if possible, the presence of some city-mission worker, or other person of experience in this field of service.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The events of this lesson took place in midsummer of A. D. 28, the second year of Christ's ministry.

Place. — The events of the first part of the chapter occurred at Capernaum and at Nain. The Pharisee's dinner was given at some unnamed city of Galilee, perhaps Capernaum or Nain.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Banquet customs of ancient days.
Christ's relation to notorious sinners.
Christ's treatment of women.
The Pharisaic attitude as illustrated in the Gospels.
Characteristics of Luke's Gospel as shown in what he alone records.
Christ's resurrection miracles.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Christ's Help for the Sorrowful and the Sinful.

I. CHRIST'S HELP FOR THE SORROWFUL, vs. 1–35.
The healing of the centurion's servant.
The raising of the son of the widow of Nain.
The cures that answered John's question.
How Christ helps the sorrowful to-day.

II. CHRIST'S HELP FOR THE SINFUL, vs. 36–50.
The penitent sinner.
The critical Pharisees.
The two debtors.
How Christ helps the sinful to-day.

THE LESSON IN ART.

"The Healing of the Centurion's Servant," by Veronese (Madrid), Bida, Tissot. "The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain," by Zuccaro, Caracci, Bida, Tissot, Hofmann. "The Feast in the House of Simon the Pharisee," by Moretto, Veronese (Louvre, Milan, etc.), Lanzani (Vienna), Bassano (Hampton Court), Mabuse, Cranach (Berlin), Rubens (Petrograd), Froment (Florence), Subleyras (Louvre), Jouvenet (Lyons), Bida, Tissot.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Snowden's *Scenes and Sayings in the Life of Christ.* Dawson's *Life of Christ.* Brown's *The Master's Way.* Davis's *The Story of the Nazarene.* Broughton's *Table Talks of Jesus.* Selby's *The God of the Frail.* Gibson's *Jesus Christ.* Ker's *The Day-Dawn and the Rain.* Dods's *The Parables of Our Lord: St. Luke. Poems:* on the centurion's faith, by Richard Crashaw, Alan Brodrick; on the widow of Nain, by N. P. Willis; on John the Baptist's message to Christ, by Crashaw; on the anointing of Christ's feet, by George Macdonald, Hartley Coleridge, Bryant (translation), Callanan, George Herbert.

I. CHRIST'S HELP FOR THE SORROWFUL, vs. 1–35. THE HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT. All the centurions (captains — commanders of one hundred soldiers) of the New Testament are fine characters. There was a centurion at Capernaum who was so great a friend of the Jews, though he was probably a Greek or Syrian or perhaps a Roman, that he had built them a synagogue. The ruins of *Tell Hum* contain the walls of a white marble synagogue of the age of the Herods, standing just above the lake, and these may very likely be the remains of the centurion's gift.

The elders (chief officers) of this synagogue went to Jesus asking him to go and heal a slave of the centurion who was very dear to him, and who was at the point of death, urging the claims of the master — as if Christ needed any such argument to send him on an errand of mercy to the very humblest! While he was on the way the centurion, who was watching anxiously by the sick slave, sent friends to Jesus with a message which our Lord himself acclaimed as more remarkable for faith than anything he had met with before in his own people. "I am not worth your entering my house," was the centurion's message. "I have authority, and when I bid a soldier go, he goes. Will you not use your vast, divine authority and, from where you are, simply command the disease to depart?" Christ could not refuse this wonderful request or fail so great faith. The friends, returning to the centurion, found the slave entirely well.

THE RAISING OF THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN. Southwest of the Sea of Galilee, about twenty-five miles from Capernaum, near Endor, and on the northern slope of Little Hermon, was the city of Nain, now only a village of ruins occupied by a few Moslems. "Nain" means "lovely," and its beautiful outlook well warrants the name. On the hillside to the east of the village are still to be seen some tombs cut in the rocks. As Christ with his disciples and a large number of curious and interested people were approaching Nain by a narrow, rocky path which still exists, they were obliged to make way for a very sad procession coming from the city, headed for these tombs. Men were bearing an open coffin in which lay the form of a young man. Behind it walked the chief mourner, his widowed mother, borne down with grief because he was her only son.

Our Lord, always most deeply moved by such bereavement, approached the weeping mother and spoke strange words: "Weep not." "This was in striking contrast with the ordinary formula used at funerals in Palestine, and it would have seemed like mocking grief if it had not been spoken by One who had power to help and heal the broken heart." — *Rev. Joseph T. Gibson, D.D.* Jesus justified them immediately by touching the coffin and restoring the young man to life with a word, so that the wonder of the great event spread through all the country round about and even into Judæa to the south.

Illustration. At Endor near by, King Saul, many centuries before this, had consulted the witch, only to learn that he and his sons were to perish the next day in the disastrous battle of Gilboa. How different the message of Nain! and how well the difference illustrates the hope that floods the New Testament from the open tomb of Jesus!

THE CURES THAT ANSWERED JOHN'S QUESTION. John the Baptist, in his gloomy prison, shut in from the active outdoor life that he had always enjoyed, fell into natural despondency and doubt. "It seemed to him that he had lived in vain. His disciples themselves could not conceal their sadness and perplexity. In those dreary days even John's faith was partially eclipsed. The news that came to him of Christ's joyous progresses in Galilee filled him with alarm and doubt." — *Rev. William J. Dawson, D.D.* This was a Messiah very different from what the stern Baptist had imagined.

Unable to go and see for himself, John did the next best thing, he sent two of his disciples to visit the scene of Christ's labors and bring back a report. They frankly asked Christ whether he was the expected Messiah, the Saviour. Our Lord's answer was characteristic. "By their fruits ye shall know them" was ever his test. He worked many miracles of blessed healing, and sent the messengers back with their accounts of blind eyes opened, cripples sent leaping away, lepers restored, deaf ears unstopped, even the dead brought back to life, and — what Christ put last as the climax of it all — good tidings preached to the *poor*.

Such is always the crowning proof of Christianity — the blessings it brings. "In this twentieth century let the faith which answers in hearts renewed and wills

37. And behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner ; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment,

---

strengthened, in homes sweetened and in whole nations directed toward the higher ends of human existence stand fast and bear rule ! The religious claim in any age must submit to the test of achievement." — *Dean Charles R. Brown, D.D.*

HOW CHRIST HELPS THE SORROWFUL TO-DAY. Christ's heart is as loving and tender as ever. These events are to show us his heart.

Doubtless many are healed to-day in answer to prayer, and myriads of sad hearts are comforted by the same blessed agency.

At the same time Christ has revealed to men many powerful agencies in his natural world, and wishes us to make faithful use of these — medicine, surgery, hygiene, and the like,— while at the same time we pray for his blessing on the use of these means.

The Christian is not to affect a stoical indifference to grief, but he will not allow it to bear rule over him, spoiling his life. He will not sorrow as one without hope.

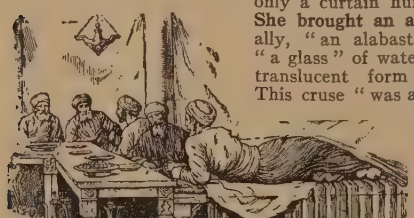
Christ is with us in our sorrows even more plainly and blessedly than in our joys, for he is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

There is no sorrow that Christ does not know and cannot heal.

One of the very best cures for our sorrows is to carry the healing Christ to some other sorrowing heart.

II. **CHRIST'S HELP FOR THE SINFUL,** vs. 36–50. " This exquisite narrative is peculiar to St. Luke, and well illustrates that conception of the universality and free gift of grace which predominates in his Gospel as in St. Paul." — *F. W. Farrar.* Our Lord was invited to eat a meal at the house of a certain Pharisee, who thereby showed himself superior to the definite hatred and open hostility shown toward Jesus by most of the Pharisees. He was curious regarding the new teacher, regarded him as perhaps a prophet (verse 39), was possibly willing to learn of him, and yet received Christ with scant courtesy and with proud coldness. " Jesus stood ever ready to enter a door that was open. It made no difference to him whether it was the door of a Pharisee, his enemy, or the door of his most intimate and beloved friend." — *Rev. Len. G. Broughton, D.D.*

37. **And behold, a woman who was in the city.** Possibly Nain, the last city named by Luke. Others suggest Capernaum, *the* city of Jesus in Galilee. **A sinner,** " a fallen woman. Innocence, temptation, and fall had been her life history. Doubtless fair had been the bloom of her youth, subtle and seductive had been the wiles of her betrayer, and now bitter and despairing were the depths of her degradation. She was a social outcast, and life had no more joy and hope for her. But one day an event happened that changed the whole course of her unhappy life : she heard Jesus." — *Rev. James H. Snowden, D.D.* **And when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house.** The liberal customs of the East allowed her to enter without an invitation, pass from the courtyard through the entrance where only a curtain hung, and stand in the dining-room. **She brought an alabaster cruse of ointment.** Literally, " an alabaster of ointment," as we speak of " a glass " of water. Alabaster is a beautiful, white, translucent form of gypsum (sulphate of lime). This cruse " was a kind of cruet, having a cylindrical form at the top. Pliny compares these vessels to a closed rosebud, and says that ointments are best preserved in them." — *Prof. Marvin R. Vincent.* Oils and fats readily absorb and retain odors, and were the base of the ancient ointments, the fragrance being imparted by myrrh, cinnamon, cassia, nard, laurel, lily, etc.



Reclining at a Meal.

38. **And standing behind at his feet.** The guests, according to

38. And standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39. Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner.

40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Teacher, say on.

---

the custom of the day, did not sit up at a table, but reclined on couches, leaning on their left elbows, a low table being in front of them. This table was often in the form of a hollow square, open on one side that servants might enter and supply the viands and the drink. **Weeping.** Christ's words had moved her with a deep sense of her sinfulness. She was weeping over a wasted life. **She began to wet his feet with her tears.** "It is probable that our Lord had that day uttered with infinite and irresistible pathos those wonderful words, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'" — *Rev. Joseph T. Gibson, D.D.* This sinning woman had heard the invitation and was accepting it. **And wiped them with the hair of her head.** Her impulsive temperament, which had possibly led her astray at first, now stands her in good stead, and rebukes our cold and tardy expressions of gratitude, our cautious and timorous professions of love to Christ." — *Prof. Marcus Dods, D.D.* **And kissed his feet.** "All this seems foreign to our sense of propriety and delicacy, but it was in accordance with Oriental custom and expression of respect." — *Snowden.* **And anointed them with the ointment.** It has been sought to identify this sinning woman with the holy Mary of Bethany who anointed Christ's feet just before the crucifixion, but there is absolutely no reason for the identification. "The time, the place, the circumstances, the character, the words uttered, and the results of the incident recorded in Matt. 26 : 7 ; Mark 14 : 3 ; John 12 : 3 are all *entirely different.*" — *F. W. Farrar.* Others have attempted to show that this sinning woman was Mary Magdalene, thus unjustly defaming the noble character of that holy woman, one of the most faithful followers of the Saviour, a woman of entirely pure life, so far as the record shows, though afflicted with demons. "The *ointment* here has a peculiar interest, as being the offering by a penitent of that which had been an accessory in her unhallowed work of sin." — *Alford's Greek Testament.*

39. **Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it.** She had been unperceived in the shadows before, but the odor of the ointment filled the room and called attention to her. **He spoke within himself.** Even he was ashamed to express the unkind thought in words. **Saying, This man, if he were a prophet.** Evidently Simon had been thinking that possibly Jesus was a prophet of the ancient type, perhaps another Isaiah or Elijah. **Would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him.** This was the essence of Pharisaism — to preserve one's self from the touch of defilement of any sort, to keep one's self isolated in a selfish and proud purity. If they had been as anxious to avoid contact with sin as to avoid touching sinners they would have been infinitely holier. "Sympathy has wonderful eyes, but nothing is so blind as spiritual pride." — *Rev. John Ker.* This Pharisee could not really see Christ, or the woman, or himself. **That she is a sinner.** "'Sinner,' the last word that the Pharisee would ever have thought of applying to himself, was a contemptuous epithet that he applied freely to others." — *Rev. James H. Snowden, D.D.*

40. **And Jesus answering said unto him.** "Jesus understands not only our spoken words, but our thought words. You did not have to speak words of hate against your neighbor for Jesus to hear them. Jesus seems to be in himself a kind of thoughtograph. How awful the responsibility, especially when we remember that we shall have to give an account at the last day for every idle word and thought!" — *Rev. Len G. Broughton, D.D.* **Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.** Some have thought to identity Simon the Pharisee with Simon the Leper in Mark 14 : 3, but without reason. "There were two Simons among the twelve, and there are nine Simons mentioned in the New Testament alone, and twenty in Josephus. There must therefore have been thousands of Simons in Palestine, where names were

41. A certain lender had two debtors : the one owed five hundred shillings, and the other fifty.

42. When they had not *wherewith* to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most ?

43. Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.

---

few." — *F. W. Farrar.* **And he saith, Teacher, say on.** Simon was politely ready to hear what Christ might have to say in his own defence.

41. **A certain lender had two debtors.** The lender, as it proved, was God, to whom all men are so vastly in debt ; most of all, on account of the sad fact of sin. Jesus came to earth to pay this debt. Under the oppression of the Herods and Romans, with their heavy taxes, great debts were often incurred by the citizens of that unhappy land — a condition reflected by our Lord's frequent references to debts and debtors in his teachings. **The one owed five hundred shillings.** The coin named was the denarius, worth about fifteen cents in our money, but worth in purchasing power much more, being the day's wages of a laborer. This sum would therefore pay a laborer for nearly two years of work, say $2,500 at prices now paid in the United States. **And the other fifty.** "The fifty-shillings debtor is an outlined sketch of the character of Simon. The man had a tiny store of love and good will to Jesus, which store he dealt out with studied parsimony." — *Rev. Thomas G. Selby, D.D.* That tiny bit of regard was the measure of his fancied debt.

42. **When they had not wherewith to pay.** Both were bankrupt, the fifty-shillings debtor equally with the five-hundred-shillings debtor. All men, however respectable, have sinned more than they ever can atone for ; all are in desperate need of God's grace. **He forgave them both.** "What depth of meaning there is in these words, if we reflect *Who* said them, and by what means this forgiveness was to be wrought ! " — *Alford's Greek Testament.* The verse in the Greek is that which gives us our word "charity" — "he charitied them both." **Which of them therefore will love him most ?** "Therefore," that is, so far as love depends upon the extent of obligation. Of course the man who had been forgiven little *might* have a deeper sense of gratitude than the heavier debtor, but this is not likely.

43. **Simon answered and said.** He answered carelessly and superciliously, as if scorning to bother with so trivial a question. **He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most.** "The parable is so put that it is obvious to the entire company that great love means great forgiveness, while meagre love means small or doubtful forgiveness." — *Prof. Marcus Dods, D.D.* **And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.** "Rightly" is a Greek word often used by Socrates when he gives ironical praise for an answer that is correct on the surface but full of unsuspected fallacies.

44. **And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon.** Perhaps the shrinking woman was about to leave in alarm, and the Saviour beckoned to her to remain. **Seest thou this woman ?** The Pharisee up to this point had hardly deigned to glance at such a creature ; now Christ bids him look at her fully, for she had played the host more graciously than Simon. **I entered into thy house,** and of course at the Pharisee's invitation, as his guest to whom Simon was under the obligations of courtesy. This speech of Christ's, as often when the Master was under the stress of strong emotion, is rhythmical in the Greek, and might easily be written as poetry. **Thou gavest me no water for my feet.** The foot gear in Palestine was sandals merely, the feet being bare. The roads were dusty and hot, and slaves were customarily set to washing the feet of guests as a most necessary attention and comfort. **But she hath wetted my feet with her tears.** Many affect to be above the small courtesies of life, but Jesus showed that he valued them. "A man is not a Martin Luther, a Dr. Samuel Johnson, or even a Thomas Carlyle, because he sets himself to imitate some of the skin-deep blemishes of these famous men. Courtesy, as Jesus reminded Simon, is the fruit of an evangelical experience, and scant courtesy often means scant experience." — *Rev. Thomas G. Selby, D.D.*

45. Thou gavest me no kiss : but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but she hath anointed my feet with ointment.

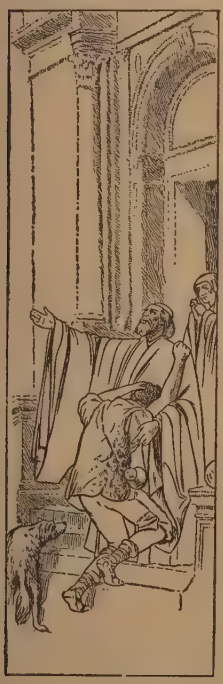
47. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little.

48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

45. **Thou gavest me no kiss.** "The kiss would have been on the cheek, or possibly (if Simon had wished to be very respectful) on the hand." — *International Critical Commentary.* **But she, since the time I came in.** The woman evidently entered with Christ and his disciples, and, for fear of being driven out, had entered upon her errand as soon as Christ lay down on the couch. **Hath not ceased to kiss my feet.** His *feet* — while Simon had not given the customary salutation on the cheek !

46. **My head with oil thou didst not anoint.** Olive oil, so common and cheap in Palestine, would ordinarily be used for this purpose ; but Simon did not even go to this expense. **But she hath anointed my feet with ointment.** Where the Pharisee did not refresh Christ's head, the sinful woman had refreshed his feet ; and where he had not used common oil, she had used costly ointment.

47. **Wherefore I say unto thee.** "Had Jesus Christ been less than he was, had he been guided only by worldly wisdom, he would have rebuked the woman and gained the good will and respect of the Pharisee. But he came to seek and to save the lost, and to bear witness to the truth."— *Rev. Joseph T. Gibson, D.D.* **Her sins which are many.** Recognizing the woman's penitence and loving gratitude, Christ could not forget her sinful past. The awful fact of former sin cannot be obliterated even by pardon. **Are forgiven.** Again, as in the case of the paralytic, Jesus calmly assumes the prerogative of the Deity. **For she loved much.** The "for" goes back to the "many" sins ; her great love is evidence of her great sinfulness ; much gratitude argues much forgiveness for which to be thankful. **But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.** Jesus, of course, did not teach that we are to sin much so that we may come to love Christ the more deeply. He is taking Simon at his own estimate, that he needs little forgiveness ; an estimate that causes Simon to love Jesus only a little. Some day, perhaps, Simon came to see his deep need of forgiveness, in that he had sinned deeply, and so came to love the Redeemer with a passion of affection as great as the sinning woman's.



The Father and the Prodigal Son.

48. **And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.** "Direct assurance of forgiveness, for confirmation of her faith tried by an unsympathetic surrounding of frowning Pharisees." — *Expositor's Greek Testament.*

Again, as in Christ's words to the paralytic (Luke 5 : 21) this announcement of forgiven sins was received with angry and indignant amazement. Our Lord, however, did not this time waste words on the Pharisees, but continued to talk to the woman. His farewell was very tender and encouraging : "Thy faith hath saved thee ; go *into* peace." Peace was the new country of the soul into which, after this blessed experience, her happy feet would press.

Illustration "In this most exquisite incident, the Symposium of Luke, it is curious to note a parallel in the much earlier Symposium of Plato. In both a rich aristocrat entertains a poor but famous teacher reclining at supper with some of his disciples. In both the dis-

course is of love. In both the Socratic method of asking entangling questions is employed. In both there enters a sinner, sinning in the name of love, whose sensuality serves by contrast to brighten the shining purity of love divine. Still, amid the resemblances, the differences are as many and as great as those between Socrates and Jesus." — *Noah K. Davis, Ph.D.*

HOW CHRIST HELPS THE SINFUL TO-DAY. He shows them their possibilities, he pictures the footing of regard on which he wants to place them. "How often does the insight of Jesus reverse our judgments and standards of value! The man that stands high in the church and prides himself on his respectability and righteousness may fall to a lower level in the sight of Christ than some poor penitent from whose presence and touch society recoils. It is still written that the first shall be last and the last shall be first; and it is still true of some church people that publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before them." — *Rev. James H. Snowden, D.D.*

Christ dealt with the classes hardest to reach, as we are likely to think. He melted their hard hearts, won them by his love, and sent them forth into life again purified and restored. He can do that to-day for the vilest sinner.

Christ never gives up the sinner. He always stands ready and eager to forgive. Christ goes more than half way to meet the sinner. Like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, he sees the repentant sinner afar off, runs to him, and falls on his neck, kissing him.

Christ stands up for the repentant sinner against all harsh critics; he is on his side.

Christ wins the sinner by love — not by threats, or argumentation, or bribery, but by love.

Christ has many ways of reaching men, and does not deal with any two in exactly the same way; but with all he is the same loving, tender Saviour.

"She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch;
And he wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
I am a sinner, full of doubts and fears;
Make me a humble thing of love and tears." — *Hartley Coleridge.*

LESSON IX. — November 26.

JESUS THE GREAT MISSIONARY. — Luke 8.

PRINT vs. 1–3, 26–33, 38, 39.

GOLDEN TEXT. —*The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.* — LUKE 19 : 10.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 47.
Reference Material : Matt. 4 : 23; 9 : 35–38.
Primary Topic : JESUS BRINGS A LITTLE GIRL BACK TO LIFE.
Lesson Material : Luke 8 : 49–56.
Memory Verse : Jehovah is gracious and merciful. Ps. 111 : 4.
Junior Topic : JESUS THE GREAT MISSIONARY.
Lesson Material : Luke 8 : 1–3, 26–39. Print vs. 1–3, 26–33, 38, 39.
Memory Verse : Luke 19 : 10.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : JESUS MEETING ALL HUMAN NEEDS.
Topic for Young People and Adults : JESUS THE IDEAL MISSIONARY.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Primary Classes will study the raising from the dead of the daughter of Jaïrus, and will not study at all the fearful picture of the demoniac. The other younger classes, however, will make the cure of the demoniac their main study, while glancing at the other examples of Christ's wonderful power and at his missionary work in general. Try to use this lesson in such a way as to fill the pupils with a zeal for missions.

The Older Classes will have in this lesson a fine opportunity for a thorough study of the missionary aspects of Christ's ministry. The chapter illustrates what Christ had to sacrifice, the helpers he had, the journeys he took, the way he taught, the dangers he encountered, the practical ministrations which he mingled

with his teaching, and the way he held firmly to his one aim. Different students may be assigned to discuss these topics, and each theme should be applied to the present day.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Autumn of A. D. 28, in the second year of Christ's ministry.

Place. — The Sea of Galilee; near a town by the sea in "the country of the Gerasenes" on the southeast coast; at Capernaum.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

How Christ journeyed.
Christ's agricultural references, and farming in Palestine.
Christ's relations to his family.
Examples of storms in the Bible.
What was demon-possession?
The characteristics of Jesus as a missionary.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Jesus the Ideal Missionary.

I. THE GREAT MISSIONARY PREACHING, VS. 1–21.
A missionary tour.
The parable of the seed.
The parable of the lamp.
His mother and brothers.
Our missionary teaching.

II. THE GREAT MISSIONARY DRIVING OUT DEMONS, VS. 22–39.
The storm on the lake.
The tempest in a brain.
"Declare what God has done."
Our demons driven out.

III. THE GREAT MISSIONARY HEALING AND RAISING FROM THE DEAD, VS. 40–56.
The healing touch of faith.
The daughter of Jairus.
"Tell no man."
Raised from the death of sin.

THE LESSON IN ART.

The parable of the sower, by Domenico Feti (Venice), Liberale da Verona (Siena), Albrecht Altdorfer, Bida, Tissot, J. E. Millais. Christ stilling the tempest, Rembrandt, Bida, Tissot. The demoniac healed, by Domenico Morelli, Tissot. The raising of the daughter of Jairus by Doré, G. Muziano, Eeckhout (Berlin), Overbeck, Richter, J. E. Steinle, Bida, Hofmann, Tissot, Albert Keller, J. de Vriendt, Morelli. The woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment, by Veronese (Vienna), Bida, Tissot.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

On the parable of the sower, Broughton's *The Kingdom Parable*, Morgan's *The Parables of the Kingdom*, Dods's *The Parables of Our Lord (Matthew)*, Macduff's *Parables of the Lake*, Mozley's *Occasional Sermons*. On the stilling of the tempest, Lees's *Life of Christ*. On demon-possession see Edersheim's life of Christ, Nevius's *Demon-Possession and Allied Themes*, and the article on Demons in Hastings's *Dictionary of Christ*. On the healing of the demoniac, sermon (anonymous) in *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, Watkinson's *Studies in Christian Character* (Second Series), Buxton's *The Old Road*, Parkhurst's *Three Gates on a Side*, Paterson-Smyth's *People's Life of Christ*. On Jairus's daughter, Maclaren's *Expositions*, Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*.

1. And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and with him the twelve,

I. THE GREAT MISSIONARY PREACHING, vs. 1–21. Our Lord's first preaching tour through Galilee is marked by Luke 5 : 44 (Matt. 4 : 23; Mark 1 : 39). With the eighth chapter begins his second preaching tour through his home province.

1. **And it came to pass soon afterwards.** "The expression marks a new phase, a new departure, in Christ's mode of action. Hitherto he had made Capernaum his headquarters, regarded it as 'his own city,' and not gone any great distance from it. At this period — the exact beginning of which is only vaguely marked — he began a wider range of missions." — *Cambridge Bible.* **That he went about through cities and villages.** The Greek implies that he preached from city to city and from village to village, doing the work with great thoroughness. **Preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God.** The good news that Christ brought to men was that his rule of righteousness, peace, and joy was at hand, that each might set it up in his life at once. It consisted of the knowledge of God as their loving Father, of his eagerness to forgive their sins if they would only repent, of his willingness to lead them by his Spirit into the ideal life. All this was *news* to Christ's hearers, strange tidings, because it was so different from what they had been taught, though it is all so familiar to us that we are in danger of forgetting how wonderful and blessed it is. **And with him the twelve.** The twelve disciples. This implies that Jesus and the twelve were heralding the good news together, and not that Jesus alone preached, the twelve being with him merely as companions; they were co-laborers in the gospel mission." — *Rev. Edwin W. Rice, D.D.*

2. **And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.** Once Jesus' disciples (John 4 : 27) were surprised that he would even speak with a woman,

2. And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

3. And Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance.

so despised and neglected were women in the East and in his day. They must have become accustomed to it by this time Jesus was the deliverer of women from the low regard in which they were held. It is he, and he alone, that has given woman her rightful place in the world. No one but he would have admitted women to be associates on an evangelistic tour. Luke's Gospel, so tender and gentle, notes especially this aspect of Christ's ministry, and it is thought that many of the writer's informants were women. **Mary that was called Magdalene.** "After *Migdol*, a 'watch-tower.' The word *Migdol* is common, but a place now marked by a squalid hamlet known as *Mejdel*, at the south of the little plain of Cennesaret where the hills approach the lake, is likely to have been Mary's home, as it is near the center of our Lord's ministry." — *New Century Bible.* This Mary (Miriam) is called "Magdalene" to distinguish her from the others of the same name in the New Testament. **From whom seven demons had gone out.** Seven is the number of completeness; hers was an aggravated case of demoniacal possession. There is no warrant for the common belief that she was a bad woman.

3. **And Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod's steward.** "She must have been a person of wealth and high rank at the court of Herod Antipas. There were evidently not a few believers in that wicked and dissolute center. Some years later we read of Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod, as a notable Christian (Acts 13 : 1). Even Herod himself, we know, at first heard John the Baptist gladly; and, after the terrible judicial murder, we find that unhappy prince fancying that his victim had risen from the dead. It has been suggested that this Chuzas was the nobleman of Capernaum whose dying son was healed by Jesus (John 4 : 46). If this be the case, there would be a special reason for the loving devotion of this Joanna to the Master. She reappears among the faithful women in the history of the resurrection (Luke 24 : 10)."— *Pulpit Commentary* **And Susanna, and many others.** We know nothing of Susanna except that her name means a lily (compare Rhoda, "a rose," Tamar, "a palm-tree," etc.). The "many others" hints at the wealth of detail omitted from these brief Gospel accounts. **Who ministered unto them of their substance.** "These three verses are evidence of the excellence of Luke's sources. The information contained in them is exact and minute. The names and other details are utterly unlike fiction. An inventor would avoid such things as likely to be refuted; moreover, no motive for invention can be discerned. The passage tells us — what no other evangelist makes known — how Jesus and his disciples lived when they were not being entertained by hospitable persons. The common purse (John 13 : 29; compare 12 : 6) was kept supplied

A Sower.

by the generosity of pious women. This form of piety was not rare. Women sometimes contributed largely towards the support of rabbis, whose rapacity in accepting what could ill be spared was rebuked by Christ (Luke 20 : 47 ; Matt. 23 : 13 ; Mark 12 : 40) with great severity." — *International Critical Commentary.*

THE PARABLE OF THE SEED. A wonderful series of parables was spoken by Jesus as he sat, because of the crowd, in a boat near the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The first of these is the parable of the sower, which is more accurately the parable of the seed. This parable "is both a solemn lesson and warning, and also a description of what is actually taking place in the world. It tells how the human heart actually treats the seed which is put into it — the word of God, — the impulse which it receives from God to lead a good and holy life."— *Canon J. B. Mozley, D.D.* "The soil is the heart of a man; here the Holy Spirit sows his seed."—*Rev. Len G. Broughton, D.D.* The parable pictures four classes : "Persons on whom the seed of the word falls as by accident, and who have neither prepared themselves to hear it, nor make any effort to retain it. Persons of shallow nature, easily susceptible to the gospel and quickly responsive, but as easily defeated by pain, suffering, and hardship. Persons whose hearts are occupied with so many other interests that only a small part of their energies are available for giving effect to Christ's ideas. Persons whose hearts are honest, thoughtful, and patient, that bring forth the seeds of truth to an abundant harvest." — *Condensed from Prof. Marcus Dods.* "What an abundant crop may be yours and that of all, who, in the morning — the blessed bright morning — of early days sow the precious seed! doing the thing that is right, however others may do the thing that is wrong."—*J. R. Macduff.*

"O God, by whom the seed is given,
By whom the harvest's blest,
Whose Word like manna showered from heaven
Is planted in our breast,

"Preserve it from the passing feet,
And plunderers of the air,
The sultry sun's intensest heat,
And weeds of worldly care!

"Though buried deep or thinly strewn
Do thou thy grace supply ;
The hope in earthly furrows sown
Shall ripen in the sky!" — *Reginald Heber.*

Jesus, the Great Missionary, came to sow good seed in the world. What a rich harvest has sprung up, in the world's happiest and wisest regions ! and how far from complete and satisfactory the harvest still is. Every Christian is a seed-sower, and the preachers and missionaries are the best seed-sowers of all.

Oriental Lamp and Lamp-Stand.

THE PARABLE OF THE LAMP. The little parable of the lamp is only a single sentence and two sentences of application. It compares Christ's truth to a lamp, which is of value only as it sends out light. A non-missionary Christian is as useless as a lamp covered over with a peck measure or shoved under a bed. Moreover, the gospel lamp has this peculiarity which Jesus sets forth : if we do not use it, it is taken from us. No man long retains his Christian faith that does not seek to impart it to others. As Dr. A. J. Gordon said, "If you are not a *missionary* Christian, you will be a *missing* Christian in the last great day of accounts."

HIS MOTHER AND BROTHERS. An incident full of poignant meaning for all missionaries and many other Christian workers is the coming to Jesus of his mother and brothers (and, some manuscripts say, his sisters), seeking apparently to withdraw him from the public life where his frank and fearless teaching of unpopular truth was making him many enemies. The Great Missionary was compelled to do what so many of his followers have since done with sad hearts, adhere to his work with the loss of home joys and the sundering of family ties. "It cost Jesus an effort, for he possessed a warm heart and unblighted natural affections. But he sacrificed natural affection on the altar of duty, as he finally sacrificed his life." — *Prof. A. B. Bruce, D.D.*

OUR MISSIONARY TEACHING. "Let us take our poor, imperfect services, and lay them down at the Master's feet,

26. And they arrived at the country of the Gĕr′-ā-sēnę̣s′, which is over against Galilee.

27. And when he was come forth upon the land, there met him a certain man out of the city, who had demons ; and for a long time he had worn no clothes, and abode not in *any* house, but in the tombs.

---

and ask him to help us to make clean work of these hearts of ours, and to turn out of them all our worldly hankerings after the seen and temporal. Then we shall bear fruit that he will gather into his garner." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

The life of sincere devotion to Christ cannot help being a teaching life. It will teach unconsciously, with its manifest obedience, peace, joy, and beauty. It will teach consciously also, as far as power is given and opportunity comes or can be found.

Opportunities for missionary teaching are many to-day and are open to all. There is the Sunday school, always needing teachers. There is the young people's society with its crowd of responsive boys and girls, young men and women. There is the church prayer meeting, always eager for fresh voices. There are the Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. C. A. and the city missions. Every day there are opportunities as you meet your friends and acquaintances. Our missionary teaching should begin when our Christian life begins, and last as long as we are in this world.

II. **THE GREAT MISSIONARY DRIVING OUT DEMONS,** vs. 22–39. THE STORM ON THE LAKE. After his preaching which included the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus wished to be alone with his disciples and invited them to go with him to the eastern side of the lake. The Sea of Galilee occupies a great depression in the earth's surface, its waters being 682.5 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The hot air rises from this deep basin, the cold air rushes in to take its place, and the result is the sudden storms which rush across the lake, storms very dangerous to shipping. As Jesus and his disciples were on their way across, one of these storms struck their little vessel, almost capsizing it. The weary Teacher slept on until awakened by his terrified followers. Then by a word he stilled the tempest, and in the midst of the " great calm " that resulted he upbraided the disciples for their lack of faith. " They recognized his ability to save them, but they had no perception of the mystery of divine power surrounding the angry waters. It was this absence of recognition of God's presence to which Jesus alluded in his rebuke, his disciples' failure to look beyond the things seen by the mortal eye." — *Rev. G. Robinson Lees.* This faith in the unseen Power is the great reliance of all missionaries and of all Christian workers. " I can do all things," said Paul, " in him that strengtheneth me " (Phil. 4 : 13). Without him all our missionary enterprises will fail, but with him they will surely and gloriously succeed.

THE TEMPEST IN A BRAIN. 26. **And they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes.** This cannot be the region around Gadara, for that city, southeast of the lake, is inland about thirty miles. Nor can it be in the neighborhood of Gergesa, halfway down the eastern shore, for the margin of the lake there does not correspond with the account of the miracle. " There is *one spot only* on the eastern shore which answers completely to the description of the Synoptists." — *Hastings's Dictionary of Christ.* That is at a ruined village now called Khersa, which is opposite Tiberias. Here the topography exactly fits the New Testament account. **Which is over against Galilee.** Luke wrote for a Greek who was not well acquainted with the country.

27. **And when he was come forth upon the land.** Their boat having been swept southward by the storm. **There met him a certain man out of the city.** A man *belonging to* the city, but he had just come from the hills. Matthew (8 : 28) speaks of two demoniacs ; perhaps one was so much more conspicuous and violent than the other that he alone got into the account of Mark and Luke. **Who had demons.** The New Testament clearly recognizes the evil spirit, Satan, as entering into men and causing mental and physical diseases of great severity — dumbness, deafness, blindness, convulsions, fever, insanity. Christ is shown as opposed to this kingdom of Satan, and as determined to end it. Not all demoniacs were regarded as wicked, but demon-possession as a whole was associated with immorality. Epilepsy would account for many of the phenomena of demon-possession, but it falls far short of explaining all that Christ and the New Testament says of this affliction. The opinions of the times regarding demoniacs are reflected in the New Testament, but

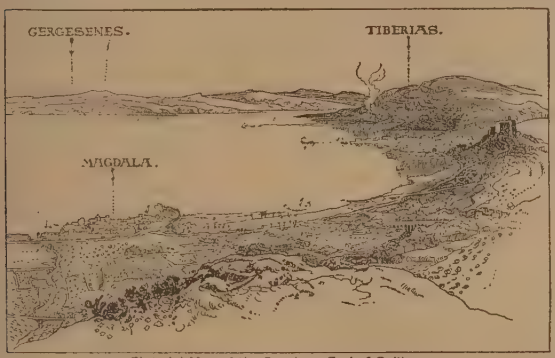
28. And when he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29. For he was commanding the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him: and he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters; and breaking the bands asunder, he was driven of the demon into the deserts.

30. And Jesus asked him, What is thy name? And he said, Legion; for many demons were entered into him.

---

the Gospel accounts of Christ's miracles have nothing in common with current superstitions. They are severe in their simplicity, straightforward in their honesty, warm in their sympathy with very real human suffering. Though some phases of insanity and certain phenomena in mission lands, notably China, are akin to demon-possession, yet this manifestation of the evil one seems on the whole to have passed from earth in proportion as Christianity has increased in power and influence. **And for a long time he had worn no clothes.** "The propensity to go entirely naked is a well-known symptom in certain kinds of raving madness." — *Alford's Greek Testament.* **And abode not in any house, but in the tombs.** "In the mountains above Khersa there are numbers of caves and also rock-cut tombs where the demoniacs may have lived." — *Hastings's Dictionary of Christ.*



Pictorial Map of the Southern End of Galilee.

28. **And when he saw Jesus, he cried out.** Mark (5 : 8) tells us that our Lord had bidden the unclean spirit to come out of him. **And fell down before him.** "Perhaps some momentary glimpse of sanity drove him there for protection." — *J. Paterson-Smyth, LL.D.* **And with a loud voice said.** As in the phenomenon of double personality, with which modern psychologists are becoming familiar, the demons spoke independently of the man. **What have I to do with thee.** Professor Moffatt's translation: "What business have you with me?" **Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God?** There are indications that this title for God was used in exorcising demons. **I beseech thee, torment me not.** All demons ask only to be let alone and allowed to do their fiendish work.

29. **For he was commanding the unclean spirit to come out of the man.** That is what, in many ways, Christ was always doing and is still doing through his faithful agents. **For oftentimes it had seized him.** This was a long-standing case, hardest to cure. **And he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters.** Note the heaping up of restraints — and all in vain. **And breaking the bands asunder.** Madness greatly intensified muscular power, as is often experienced. **He was driven of the demon into the deserts.** The wild country was the favorite abode of the wild demon.

30. **And Jesus asked him, What is thy name?** Jesus probably wished to restore him to his natural self, and so asked this natural question; but the demons answered it. **And he said, Legion; for many demons were entered into him.** There were six thousand soldiers in a Roman legion, and the demoniac (probably a Jew) had heard of these formidable bodies of men, since the Romans occupied the country.

31. And they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss.

32. Now there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountan: and they entreated him that he would give them leave to enter into them. And he gave them leave.

33. And the demons came out from the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd rushed down the steep into the lake, and were drowned.

38. But the man from whom the demons were gone out prayed him that he might be with him : but he sent him away, saying,

39. Return to thy house, and declare how great things God hath done for thee. And he went his way, publishing throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him.

---

31. **And they entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss.** The special abode in the spirit world set apart for demons.

32. **Now there was a herd of many swine feeding on the mountains.** Mark says the herd numbered about two thousand. If their owners were Jews, they were breaking the law in keeping swine. **And they entreated him that he would give them leave to enter into them.** Perhaps they wished to do as much damage as possible before entering the abyss. **And he gave them leave.** We are not told why ; possibly because the owners of the swine were keeping them in defiance of the law, and needed the punishment and loss that followed.

33. **And the demons came out from the man, and entered into the swine.** The demoniac's permanent cure would be aided if he had visible evidence of the departure of the demons from him.

Illustration. Similar events, in essence, have many times occurred on mission fields. " Go to those dark islands of the southern Pacific where seventy or eighty years ago you had the lowest depths of savagedom. Comparatively ignorant men have gone there and preached Christ, and the preaching has made the islanders instead of rampant demoniacs, to be in restful tranquility, clothed with many a material good, in their right minds, at the feet of Jesus. Is there anything else, do you think, will do that ? " — *Expository Sermons.*

And the herd rushed down the steep into the lake, and were drowned. " Close to the seashore are the ruins of Khersa, the walls of which can yet be distinctly traced. Directly below Khersa the hills approach close to the lake, leaving only a narrow pebbly strand, and here the slope of the mountain-side is so steep and near to the water that a herd of animals would be likely in a headlong rush to be precipitated into the sea." — *Hastings's Dictionary of Christ.*

The swineherds (vs. 34–37) ran away in terror, and told of the miracle in the neighboring city. At once a curious crowd rushed out to the scene of the wonderful event, and found the cured demoniac sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus. He was now " clothed " (some disciple may have thrown his cloak over him) " and in his right mind." " Here is the man whom they had known rolling among the mountains and tombs day and night in the terrible restlessness of his malady, constantly on the move, now seated quietly, clothed, sane, restful, decent, master of his own being." — *Expository Sermons.* Such transformations are being worked by the gospel of Christ every day.

38. **But the man from whom the demons were gone out.** His petition was the opposite of the men from the city, who begged Jesus to depart, being terrified by his supernatural power and perhaps fearful for the safety of other droves of swine. **Prayed him that he might be with him.** He was afraid to be left alone, lest the demons should return and take possession of him again. **But he sent him away.** He need not have been afraid to go, since Jesus sent him. Every man is safe in going where Jesus sends him.

39. **Return to thy house.** " The great majority of Christ's disciples are not required, like Moses, to guide a nation ; not called, with David, to declare God's faithfulness in the great congregation ; not elected, with Paul, to confess Christ before kings : the Master sets before them the open door of their own house." — *Rev. William L. Watkinson, D.D.* **And declare how great things God hath done for thee.** " Some people come to church and bring their devil with them. They go home

to their friends and take their devil with them. We who are church-goers should show the fruits of our church-going in our home lives; we should go home to our friends and tell them by our manners and actions what great things the Lord hath done for us." — *Rev. H. J. Wilmot-Buston.* **And he went his way.** Showing thus by his obedience contrary to his desire how completely his cure had changed his spirit. **Publishing throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him.** "The term here rendered 'publishing' is a Greek word regularly translated 'preaching.' It goes to show what a simple kind of thing preaching really is as it was originally conceived and practised. It takes a great deal to make a man a preacher if he knows nothing about Christ. It takes amazingly little to make a man a preacher if he has had Christ cast any devils out of him." — *Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.*

OUR DEMONS DRIVEN OUT. "Are you any worse than this demoniac? Are you more hopeless than he? Are any of us much better than that? Are you not like that? Conscience, answer! Memory, answer!" — *Expository Sermons.* We are all in as wretched a plight as the demoniac, and equally in need of a Saviour from the devils of sin. We are none of us in a worse predicament than he, and so all of us may hope for his deliverance.

Illustration. "The natural historian informs us that the rich olive was once dry and offensive, the luscious peach bitter, the apple-tree full of spines, the aromatic rose a mere thorn, and the fields of wavy gold only wild grasses; but these natural changes are trivial compared with the glorious transformations wrought by the love and power of Christ." — *Rev. William L. Watkinson, D.D.*

III. **THE GREAT MISSIONARY HEALING AND RAISING FROM THE DEAD,** vs. 40–56. THE HEALING TOUCH OF FAITH. Jesus granted the foolish wish of the Gadarenes, and left their country, crossing back to Capernaum. Immediately on his landing an eager crowd pressed upon him, for they had been waiting for him; and among them an influential man named Jaïrus, the ruler of the synagogue. Jewish synagogues had no clergymen but were conducted by a committee of laymen, the "ruler" at their head. Jaïrus had only one child, a little girl who was even then lying at the point of death. This synagogue ruler had not the faith of the heathen centurion, but begged Jesus to come, lay his hands on the girl, and restore her to health.

As Jesus was hastening in ready response to the distracted father he was delayed by a poor woman who had suffered for twelve years with a sickness which had wasted her money as well as her health, for she had gone to many doctors in vain (note how gently Luke deals with his brother physicians compared with Mark 5 : 26!). The throng about Jesus was "suffocating" (to translate Luke literally), yet Jesus knew it instantly when this woman, coming behind him, ventured timidly to touch only the tassel at the corner of his mantle hanging over his shoulder. Instantly at this touch of faith Jesus felt that healing power had gone forth from him, and the woman, trembling with fear but rejoicing in her recovery, was told by the Great Physician that her faith had wrought the marvelous cure. "We may be sure that, though a universe waits before him, and the close-ranked hosts of heaven stand round his throne, we can reach our hands through them all, and get the gifts we need." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

Bida.

A Woman Healed by Touching the Garment of Jesus.

THE DAUGHTER OF JAÏRUS. While this interruption was taking

place, word came that Jaïrus's little daughter was dead, and that the Healer need not go farther. Then Jesus spoke a great word to Jaïrus: "Fear not, only believe," and the two kept right on, only three of the disciples being allowed to follow, the three who were to be with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and in Gethsemane, Peter, James, and John.

It was a wild scene in the house of mourning, loud outcries, piercing wails, the screams of the afflicted and of their friends being perhaps already augmented by those of hired mourners according to Eastern custom. Our Lord hushed the tumult with the astounding statement: "The child is not dead, but sleepeth," a statement which they "laughed to scorn." But Christ put them all out save the father and mother and the three disciples; and then, quietly taking the girl by the hand, he brought her back to life with a word. It was altogether different from the long struggle with which Elijah and Elisha accomplished similar miracles.

"TELL NO MAN." Why did Jesus command secrecy in regard to this miracle, while just before he had bidden the cured demoniac spread the news abroad? For one reason, the miracle here was vastly greater, in outward appearance at least, and would arouse greater importunity, since vast numbers would have some dead whom they would wish brought back to life. And for another reason, Jesus did not intend to return to the country of the Gerasenes, but he was to continue preaching in Galilee. He did not intend that his preaching should be lost in miracle-working. He wished to appeal to the spirits of men and not merely to heal their bodies. He was working for their eternity, and not to prolong their lives on earth. Thus medical missions, glorious as they are, are never allowed to cast into the shade the preaching of the gospel.

RAISED FROM THE DEATH OF SIN. "Those that are called early are called easily. The maid was newly dead. She had not been lying in her grave, like Lazarus. So here there is no agony of spirit, no crying with a loud voice, but all is quietly and easily done. All spiritual awakening is the work of God, but the young are the most easily awakened. No grave-clothes bind them yet. No long-continued sins have made them loathsome. Let fathers and mothers realize their opportunity, and plead with God for definite conversions." — *Rev. G. H. Morrison, D.D.*

Young or old, however, this lesson is to teach us that sin is death, that we have all sinned, and that there is only One who can lift us out of that living death. Shall we not hear and heed his loving voice, "I say unto thee, arise"?

LESSON X. — December 3.

JESUS SENDING OUT MISSIONARIES.— Luke 9 : 1—10 : 24.

PRINT Luke 10 : 1-11, 17.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.*— LUKE 10 : 2.

Devotional Reading : Matt. 28 : 16–20.
Reference Material : Matt. 10 : 1–42; John 17 : 17–21; 20 : 21.
Primary Topic : JESUS SENDS OUT SEVENTY HELPERS.
Lesson Material : Luke 10 : 1–5, 17.
Memory Verse : Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Mark 16 : 15.
Junior Topic : JESUS SENDS FORTH SEVENTY MISSIONARIES.
Lesson Material : Luke 10 : 1–11, 17.
Memory Verses : Matt. 28 : 19, 20.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM.
Topic for Young People and Adults : OUR HOME MISSION WORK.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes should be keeping up their "time sticks," and will have five events to add this week — seven or eight if those omitted by Luke are inserted. You may obtain a point of contact by asking the pupils if their public school ever sends out teams to play against teams of other schools,— basketball, football, baseball,— and if so, what they must do to uphold the honor of the school. In the same way Christ sent

forth his disciples, and exactly so he sends out every Christian, young or old. We are to stand up for him, and not to bring discredit on his church.

The Older Classes will make this a missionary and evangelistic lesson, with especial regard to city missions and other forms of home-mission work. Luke 9 is full of noble teachings here, as well as Luke 10. Assign the different events to different members of the class, each to come ready to make the missionary application. If possible, have some practical city-mission or other home-mission worker at hand to tell the class about his work and suggest ways in which the class can help.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The sending forth of the Twelve, winter of A. D. 29, beginning of the third year of Christ's ministry, the Year of Development. Death of John the Baptist, March, A. D. 29. Feeding of the five thousand, April. Transfiguration, summer. Sending forth of the Seventy, November or December, A. D. 29.

Place. — The Twelve labored in Galilee; the Seventy, in Peræa, Palestine east of the Jordan.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Matthew's account of the sending forth of the Twelve.
Mark's account of the death of John the Baptist.
Mark's account of the feeding of the five thousand.
Matthew's account of the walking on the water.
Mark's account of the Syro-phœnician mother.
A comparison of Matthew, Mark, and Luke on Peter's confession and the transfiguration.
Eastern salutations and customs of hospitality.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Heralds of the Kingdom.

I. THE TWELVE HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM, Luke 9.
The Twelve sent forth
The feeding of the five thousand.
Peter's great confession.
The transfiguration.
The Master teaching and healing.
Every Christian a herald of the kingdom.

II. THE SEVENTY HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM, Luke 10.
The Seventy sent forth.
The Seventy return.
Christ's thanksgiving.
Our home-mission work.

THE LESSON IN ART.

The Walking on the Water, by Giotto (St. Peter's, Rome), Veneziano (Florence), Ghiberti (Florence Baptistery), Rubens, Bida, Tissot, Morelli. The Feeding of the Five Thousand, by Giotto (Naples), Bazzi (Pienza), Tintoretto (Venice), Orrente (Petrograd), Murillo (Seville), Bida. The Syro-Phœnician Mother, by Palma (Venice), Drouais (Louvre, Paris), Bida, Tissot. The Transfiguration, by Raphael (Vatican, Rome — Raphael's last work), Perugino, Savoldo, Titian (Venice), Tintoretto (Brescia).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Dean Charles R. Brown's *The Quest of Life.* Chapman's *And Judas Iscariot.* Work's *Every Day.* Temple's *Rugby Sermons, Third Series.* George Macdonald's *The Hope of the Gospel.* Liddon's *Sermons.* Ray Palmer's *Hints on the Formation of Religious Opinions,* Kingsley's *Village Sermons.* Burrell's *For Christ's Crown.* Morrison's *The Footsteps of the Flock.* Farrar's *Social and Present-Day Questions.* Hale's *The Life in Common.* Bishop Huntington's *Christ in the Christian Year, Vol. I.* Trench's *Studies in the Gospels.*

I. THE TWELVE HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM, Luke 9. THE TWELVE SENT FORTH. We have accounts, though of course very incomplete, of three preaching tours throughout Galilee in which our Lord was accompanied by his disciples. We are not told that they preached, but they were doubtless of the greatest service in private conversations. After this course of training in the best school in the world they were ready for a glorious step in advance.

Matt. 9 : 36–38 ; 10 : 1 gives the reason for this step : the Saviour was deeply moved with compassion as he saw, everywhere he went, great multitudes of people who were hungry for religious truth, but fed only on the dry husks of Pharisaic Judaism. Christ used with regard to them two striking metaphors : they were unshepherded sheep, they were an ungathered harvest. So he sent out the twelve disciples that they might lead the sheep to the rich pastures, that they might enter the waiting fields and harvest the ripe grain.

The Twelve were sent forth " by two and two " (Mark 6 : 7), that varied abilities might co-operate, and that each might encourage and help the other. " Two are more than twice one " in all Christian work, and every Christian will do well to provide himself with some partner in " the Father's business."

In commissioning them Christ gave them his own power to drive out devils and cure diseases. The healing of the sick was to be half of their work, the other half being the preaching of the gospel. They were to go forth in simple trust, providing nothing for their journey, sure that their heavenly Father would care for them as they went about his business. Our Lord gave them extended and wonderful directions recorded in Matt. 9 : 36—11 : 1, directions that, with such changes in detail

as changing conditions have made necessary but with no changes in the spirit, have been the basis of all commissions of ministers, evangelists, and missionaries ever since.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND. We are not told that Jesus accompanied any of the disciples on their tour. Some think that at this time he went alone to a feast — probably the Feast of Purim — at Jerusalem, where he healed the cripple at the pool of Bethesda (John 5 : 1–18). About this time occurred the tragic death of John the Baptist (Luke 9 : 7–9), which — together with the need of rest — may have led Jesus, when the Twelve returned, to seek retirement with them. We are not told of their success in this journey. Perhaps it was a disappointment, and Jesus may have withdrawn with them in order to give them needed further instruction and inspiration.

Barley Cakes.

Therefore Jesus and the Twelve crossed the lake to Bethsaida ("the House of Fish") Julias, recently beautified by Herod Philip and named after the beautiful but profligate daughter of the Emperor Augustus. Near the ruins of this city is a hidden, small, and fertile plain called El Batîhah, which exactly fits the Gospel account. Thither, in spite of his desire to be alone, Christ was followed by an eager crowd, five thousand men, besides women and children, whose sick he mercifully healed. Then he took further compassion on their hunger, and fed them all with a boy's luncheon of five barley cakes and two small fishes from the lake, miraculously multiplied after the Lord had pronounced a blessing on the food and as he handed it out to the disciples to distribute. With the careful prudence that runs through all the seeming prodigality of nature, after the bountiful miracle Christ had them save the fragments, which filled twelve wicker hand-baskets, one carried for traveling by each of the disciples.

If the conjecture is correct that the mission of the Twelve was in whole or part a failure, what a lesson this miracle must have been to them! It showed them clearly where the source of power lay, for all of Christ's disciples. They saw what Christ could do with a lad's lunch. Could he not multiply as marvelously the small abilities that each of them possessed?

PETER'S GREAT CONFESSION. Frustrated thus in his desire for retirement with his disciples, Jesus sent them back across the lake while he withdrew into the hills for prayer, coming to his followers early the next morning, walking on the sea, as they were struggling against a storm. On this occasion Peter, the impetuous, also walked the waves by Christ's permission, and sank in the sea when his weak faith failed him.

A few days later (after the journey toward Tyre in the course of which Christ healed the daughter of the Syro-phœnician woman, and then on his return fed the four thousand and worked other miracles) Peter made another exhibition of his ardor, one that has set his name very high in Christian annals: he made the first clear, definite, courageous confession of faith in Christ as the Messiah, "the Son of the living God." On that confession, Christ declared, he would build his church. Every Christian becomes a Peter as he makes the same glad confession on uniting with the church. To obtain such confessions, with the obedient life which follows them when they are genuine, is the work of all the heralds of the kingdom,— of every minister, every missionary, every Sunday-school teacher.

THE TRANSFIGURATION. That same bold apostle, Simon Peter, is conspicuous in the next scene of Luke's Gospel, the transfiguration. The scene was Mount Hermon, "a high mountain" (Mark 9 : 2), about ten thousand feet high, in the extreme north of Palestine. The time was night. The witnesses on the earthward side were Peter, James, and John, the most favored disciples; on the heav-

1. Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come.

Schwartz.
Christ and St. Peter

enward side, Moses and Elijah, each honored above other men in the circumstances of his departure from earth, the one representing Law and the other Prophecy.

The subject of their talk with Jesus was the Saviour's coming death on the cross, which was to change the history and fortunes of the human race. While conversing with these two visitors from the unseen world our Lord radiated a shining splendor which was akin to the glory of Deity above the ark in the tabernacle, the mysterious Shekinah. No wonder that Peter was confused enough to make his blundering speech about the booths, and no wonder that the splendid event was closed by another word from the Father such as was uttered at Christ's baptism, " This is my beloved Son : hear him."

An experience like this awaits every true herald of the kingdom. To each herald of his our Lord is ready to show his glory ; more than that, he is eager to bestow that glory upon them (John 17 : 22, 24). Every Christian life is a transfigured life.

THE MASTER TEACHING AND HEALING. This rich ninth chapter of Luke closes with a crowded series of verses : the healing of that saddest of all Christ's patients, a demoniac boy ; Christ's prophecy of his coming death as a criminal ; the disciples' foolish dispute which of them should be the greatest in the worldly kingdom which they persisted in imagining for Christ ; our Lord's lovely rebuke in the acted parable of the little child ; the intolerance of the disciples in forbidding a man to cast out devils without using Christ's name, and of James and John in wishing to bring down fire on the inhospitable Samaritan village ; the tolerance of Christ in each instance ; the coming of three aspirants for discipleship and the stern tests with which Christ exposed the shallowness of their professions. It is a picture of the work which the heralds of the kingdom have to do, and the spirit of loving, humble, whole-hearted devotion in which Christ would have them do the work.

EVERY CHRISTIAN A HERALD OF THE KINGDOM. " The Father projected his life and love into one country of the world by sending his Son. The Son projects his life and love into all countries by sending orth disciples, men who have caught his mood and spirit. Many words are made print, but ' The Word ' which saves the world is made flesh and dwells among us, full of grace and truth." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.*

" Never limit Christ's commands. What he spake to his apostles he spake to his church, he spake to all." — *F. W. Farrar.*

" It is a distinction of which we Christians think all too little — to be charged with the maintenance of Christ's honor — to constitute, as it were, his imperial guard among the regiments of humanity, ranged around his person, or marching to spiritual combats beneath his eye." — *Canon H. P. Liddon.*

II. **THE SEVENTY HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM,** Luke 10. THE SEVENTY SENT FORTH. 1. **Now after these things.** Closely following the events recorded in Luke 9. Our Lord had left Galilee for the last time. He had gone south through Samaria (Luke 9 : 52) and had then turned eastward across the Jordan for his great

2. And he said unto them, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.

3. Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves.

ministry to Perœa (Matt. 19 : 1 ; Mark 10 : 1), for he would not leave that section of the country untouched before turning to Jerusalem for his crucifixion. **The Lord appointed seventy others.** That is, other than the Twelve. We are not given the names of one of these seventy. " They are the quiet, untitled, almost unknown men and women whom Christ sends forth. They were all laymen — ' babes ' in theological understanding. In the last analysis the hope of the world lies in the work of those plain, everyday people who form the rank and file." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.*

Illustration. Dean Brown pictures a church with a minister fifty feet high and several deacons almost as tall, while the other members of the church are not more than five feet, six or eight in their Christian activity, and spend their time in watching the three or four big trees of the church. The lofty minister finally accepts a call elsewhere, the great deacons die or move away, and the poor church is left enfeebled. On the contrary, a church where all, ministers, deacons, and the seventy are about five feet, six or eight or possibly ten, all working heartily together, is bringing in the kingdom in its community with great power and glory.

Why seventy ? As the Twelve were appointed obviously in thought of the twelve tribes of Israel, some have thought that the seventy has relation to all the nations of the world, which the Jews reckoned as seventy. Others see a reference to the seventy elders appointed by Moses to help him (Num. 11 : 16) and to the seventy members of the Sanhedrin, appointed as it were in succession to those seventy elders

And sent them two and two before his face. Some may have been husbands and wives. Some were long-time friends, used to working together. Christianity is social. Little is done by a solitary worker compared with what he accomplishes that has learned to associate others with himself. " Before his face " Professor Moffatt translates " in front of him," that is, in advance of him.

Illustration. " The apostles followed this plan after Christ's death, as they did before. Paul would go off with Barnabas, or Barnabas with Mark, or Paul with Silas, or Aquila with his wife Priscilla. They believed absolutely in the ' two or three ' doctrine : ' Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them.' "— *Edward Everett Hale.*

Into every city and place. It was our Lord's practice to visit the villages and smallest hamlets as thoroughly as the greater centers of population. No one was to be neglected, nor are his followers to neglect any. Yet on the mission fields how many thousands of villages can never have even a visit from a missionary once a year ! **Whither he himself was about to come.** These heralds of Christ would make preparations for his coming, obtaining lodgings, telling the people about him, arousing expectation, giving such words of his as they could remember, and working miracles, until the keenest interest was excited. Thus all our Christian teaching and other work is only to prepare the way for Christ's coming in power to take possession of human hearts. "Very impressive it is to see that God, when he has any great gift to communicate, proceeds by pre-arrangement."— *Bishop F. D. Huntington.* Thus the many heralds of Christ, through all the Old Testament culminating in John the Baptist, the magi, Simeon, and Anna.

2. **And he said unto them.** He gave them in part the same injunctions he had given the Twelve ; compare Luke 9 : 1–5 ; Matt. 10 : 1–42. **The harvest indeed is plenteous.** " The seed had been sown ; sunshine and rain had come ; by the songs of psalmists and the message of prophets, by national guidance and national disaster, God had been bringing Israel to its autumn." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.* **But the laborers are few.** What were twelve, what were seventy, compared with the unnumbered millions of lost souls ? Still there is this fearful discrepancy. **Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest.** Prayer is always at the bottom of missions ; the spirit of prayer leads men to the mission field and wins victories for them there. **That he send forth laborers into his harvest.** We speak of the churches or the mission boards as sending forth missionaries ; really they are only agents, and it is God who sends every missionary to his great task.

3. **Go your ways.** Safe, if they are *Christ's* ways also. **Behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves.** Lambs in innocence, simplicity, defencelessness, except that they had the one invincible defence, the power of Christ !

4. Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes ; and salute no man on the way.
5. And into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house.
6. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him : but if not, it shall turn to you again.
7. And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give : for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

---

4. **Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes.** The purse was for money, and they would need no money. The wallet "was a small basket carried on the back, or by a strap hanging from one shoulder, containing the food of the traveller." — *Ellicott.*

From a photograph by A. Forder.

Eastern Salutation.

They were to carry no food. They were not to go barefoot, but were not to carry a second pair of sandals. The Christian worker will "travel light," he will not burden himself with many possessions, each of which is a care and a distraction from his great task. **And salute no man on the way.** "This expression meant very much to the Oriental, for the salutation of the Eastern people frequently took half an hour, and sometimes an hour would be consumed. They touched their turbans, fell upon their knees, saluted one another with a holy kiss, talked together concerning their own interests. The seventy were not bidden to be impolite — this is farthest from the spirit of the Christian — yet they were commissioned to be about the King's business, and the King's business required haste." — *J. Wilbur Chapman.*

5. **And into whatsoever house ye shall enter.** Entering to seek hospitality. **First say, Peace be to this house.** This is the usual Oriental salutation on entering a house, but Christ fills it with new meaning. "My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14 : 27). "Whether the peace of God can abide in the household depends much upon the grace and peace of each one, for the wisdom of the house rests with the individual." — *Rev. E. W. Work, D.D.*

6. **And if a son of peace be there.** This is the Hebrew way of saying "a peaceful man." **Your peace shall rest upon him.** The prayers for his spiritual peace expressed in the salutation will be granted. **But if not, it shall turn to you again.** You at least will have the prayed-for peace, "since faithful work will bring a blessing to the worker if not to others." — *Prof. Bernhard Weiss, D.D.*

7. **And in that same house remain.** They are to remain there, it seems, whether

8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you :

9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10. But into whatsoever city ye shall enter, and they receive you not, go out into the streets thereof and say,

11. Even the dust from your city, that cleaveth to our feet, we wipe off against you : nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh.

17. And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name.

---

the inmates of the house become Christian or not. **Eating and drinking such things as they give.** Taking it as your right, without apology or feeling that you are trespassing. **For the laborer is worthy of his hire.** Paul (1 Tim. 5 : 18) quotes this verse in urging especial care for the maintenance of ministers. Laborers in the church are to trust to God for their food, and on the other hand the church members are to see to it that their trust finds ample satisfaction. Ministers of the gospel share with teachers the lot of being the poorest paid of earth's workers ; and this fact is a disgrace and condemnation of stingy churches. **Go not from house to house.** Jesus warned the seventy "against accepting that endless hospitality that to this day is the custom in an Eastern village. It was against frittering all their priceless hours away in accepting the little invitations they would get." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

8. **And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you.** This would be almost everywhere, in that hospitable land. **Eat such things as are set before you.** Not finding fault with the kind, the quality or the quantity of the food — an injunction that some need to this day !

9. **And heal the sick that are therein.** This was to be the beginning of their work for souls — a work for sick bodies. **And say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.** In Christ a new kingdom, a new order of affairs, was established on earth,— the kingdom which means "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

10. **But into whatsoever city ye shall enter, and they receive you not.** This guilty refusal would be expressed primarily by refusing even the hospitality which was universal in the East ; and if they kept the disciples out of their homes, they would surely keep the truth they brought out their hearts. In the most public way the disciples were to make it plain that such a city had not the slightest part in the new kingdom of Christ, not even so much as a grain of dust would represent. That kingdom would surely come, just the same, but they would be excluded from all its blessings. Even a heathen city (verses 12–16), such as Sodom and Tyre, would fare better in the day of judgment than some of the cities most favored by Christian preaching, for they would have accepted what the latter cities contemptuously rejected. Thus the eagerness for the truth shown in many parts of India and China puts to shame many a gospel-hardened city in our own land.

THE SEVENTY RETURN. 17. **And the seventy returned with joy.** "The fuller development of the new dispensation begins with the mission of the seventy, and not with the mission of the apostles." — *Westcott.* Their going out seems to have been a sign and symbol of the winning of the entire world to Christ. In apparent contrast to the mission of the Twelve, the seventy had been abundantly successful, and came back rejoicing.

Illustration. "Those of us who choose can refuse to come back to the Saviour for farther light or other direction. We can say that we now understand the whole thing perfectly, and that we can do all that is to be done without ever consulting him again. I knew a young painter once who said he should be ashamed to go to Italy to learn more of his art. He could teach himself, and would. But that young fool learned better." — *Edward Everett Hale.*

Saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name. They had not been commissioned definitely to cast out devils, as the Twelve had been, and only a short time before this the apostles themselves had proved unable to cast out a demon (Luke 9 : 40). Every Christian has to this day for one of his chief works the casting out of devils, and devils as hard to exorcise as any the seventy drove out :

demons of intemperance, of ambition, of lying, of greed, of selfishness, of hatred. "*Miracles*, have not ceased, it is *faith* that has ceased." — *F. W. Farrar.*

Jesus greatly rejoiced in this evidence of the progress of his kingdom. "I beheld Satan," he said exultingly (verse 18), "fallen as lightning from heaven." "Seeing the greatest in the least, he saw a pledge of the great exorcism of the heathen world in these slighter cures which his disciples had been strong to effect." — *Trench.*

CHRIST'S THANKSGIVING. Our Lord's thanksgiving was expressed in a burst of eager prayer to his Father and in a word of hearty congratulation to his disciples. He thanked his Father that the mighty truths and vast powers of his kingdom, to which the wise and learned of the world had not been able to attain, it had pleased God to reveal to mere babes in understanding. And he congratulated the Seventy that they had seen and heard what many great prophets and powerful kings had longed after in vain.

The best commentary on this is "the early history of the church, from which scribes and Pharisees, the Gamaliels, and nearly all of the disputers of this world, stood aloof, fishermen meanwhile and publicans, and men ignorant and unlearned, finding their place therein." — *Trench.* "The Father revealed his things to babes because the babes were his own little ones, uncorrupted by the wisdom or the care of this world, and therefore able to receive them." — *George Macdonald.* "Knowledge is good, and not only good, but it is a downright duty to seek it, and the knowledge of the truth is one of the levers by which the soul is moved, and he who never seeks it is plainly disobedient to God. And yet very often he who has obtained much knowledge is far inferior to a very ignorant brother who has a simpler spirit, inferior even in the grasp of that very truth which knowledge lays hold of." — *Bishop Temple.*

OUR HOME-MISSION WORK. Every Christian should be a home missionary. "Here is a man who hears a sermon and goes home to preach it over again to his sick wife — he preaches it better because he leaves out the non-essentials, using only those parts which are vital. Here is a woman who repeats the message to her husband who is at work, on the street-car perhaps, and could not come. Here is one who sees some passage of Scripture shine with fresh meaning and he goes out to impart it to a friend or to a group of children. Thus the gospel is preached far and wide by those who feel its power and then pass it on, according to the method of the unordained Seventy." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.*

Illustration. "Do you remember Lord Nelson in the battle of Copenhagen? It was a stern fight. The Admiral, Nelson's ranking officer, an old man whose heart misgave him, put up at the masthead of the flagship signal 39—to retreat. Nelson, pacing the deck of his ship, looked askance and saw it, but fought on. His lieutenant said to him, 'My Lord Admiral, do you see the signal 39 yonder on the flagship?' Nelson raised the glass to his one blind eye and said, 'No, I see it not. Nail to our mast signal 27 — for close quarters.' Nelson won the day. That is the sort of courage that is needed in the universal church of Christ." — *Rev. David James Burrell, D.D.*

LESSON XI. — December 10.

STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN. — Luke 10 : 25–37.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*** — Lev. 19 : 18.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 41 : 1–4, 10–13.
Primary Topic : SHOWING KINDNESS TO A STRANGER.
Lesson Material : Luke 10 : 25–37.
Memory Verse : Go, and do thou likewise. Luke 10 : 37.
Junior Topic : THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.
Lesson Material : Luke 10 : 25–37.
Memory Verse : Luke 10 : 27.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR.
Topic for Young People and Adults : JESUS' PLAN FOR SOCIETY.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes may make the lesson very realistic by building up on the sand table a winding mountain road from Jerusalem to Jericho, with rocky caves along the way. Use men dolls for the characters, a toy horse and a toy inn, and you can enact the entire parable.

The Intermediate Classes may be asked at the outset to tell instances with-

in their knowledge of good deeds done by foreigners to Americans and by Americans to foreigners. A "dago" is their neighbor, or a "chink," or a "sheeny." How will they treat him? And what can we do for our neighbors on the other side of the world?

The Older Classes have here one of the best opportunities to study the great modern problems of charity organization, of relief work, of our attitude to aliens, and the like. How can we help without pauperizing? How can we work largely and broadly and keep our organizations friendly and personal? Some charity worker will be a great help, if you can get him or her to attend.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The parable of the good Samaritan was spoken in November or December, A. D. 29, the third year of Christ's ministry.

Place. — Christ was in Peræa, the region to the east of the Jordan. Some think that the parable was spoken in Bethany, on the Jericho Road.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The Samaritans: their history and relation to the Jews.
Jericho and the Jericho road.
Jewish lawyers.
The Levites and their work compared with that of the priests.
Medicine among the Jews.
What Christianity has done to improve the methods and scope of charity.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Being a Good Neighbor.

I. THE GREAT LAW OF LOVE, vs. 25–28.
   Eternal life and how to get it.
   Love the Lord.
   Love your neighbor.

II. THE GREAT NEED OF NEIGHBORLINESS, vs. 29–32.
   The plight of the world.
   The priest passes by.
   The Levite passes by.

III. WHAT NEIGHBORS WILL DO, vs. 33–37.
   The Samaritan's compassion.
   The Samaritan's practical aid.
   Go, and do likewise.

THE LESSON IN ART.

"The Good Samaritan" is "one of the few parables which has had any prominence in art, being second to the parable of the Prodigal Son in antiquity and importance." — *Estelle M. Hurll.* Among the artists who have treated the theme are Liberale da Verona (Siena), Heinrich Aldegrever, Domenico Feti (Dresden), Jacopo Bassano (Vienna and London), Francesco Bassano (Berlin), Veronese (Dresden), Adrian Van der Velde, Rembrandt (Louvre), Sir Charles Eastlake, Siemroth, E. Dupain, Millais.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

A fine chapter in *The Forgiveness of Sins* by Sir George Adam Smith. Westcott's *The Church and the Good Samaritan* is wholly devoted to this parable. Other chapters in Leighton Parks's *Moral Leadership*, Hodges's *The Path of Life*, Caroline Hazard's *The College Year*, Maurice's *Sermons Preached in Country Churches*, Talmage's *The Masque Torn Off*, Holland's *Logic and Life*, Raymond's *The Spiritual Life*. Works on the parables by Hubbard, Lang, Trench, Dods, Guthrie, Stretton, Lithgow, etc. Townsend in *The Parables of Jesus*. An admirable poem by Plumptre. Professor James A. Montgomery's *The Samaritans*.

25. And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

I. THE GREAT LAW OF LOVE, vs. 25–28. "The story of the good Samaritan is one of our Lord's greatest and most typical parables. It is so simple that a child can read its meaning; yet it is in truth a treatise on practical ethics more profound in thought and more powerful in effect than any other in the world. Is it too much to say that in these few verses there is contained the essential truth of man's relations with his fellow men?" — *Bishop Lang.* "There is nothing in literature more simple and sensible in the truth that it enforces, or sublime and stimulating in the charity that it illustrates, than is the parable of the good Samaritan." — *Prof. George L. Raymond.*

25. **And behold, a certain lawyer stood up.** Christ was evidently teaching in some place — perhaps a private house — where the company were seated, and the lawyer rose to put his question. "A lawyer — not in our modern sense of the term, but an expert in religious law, a divine as much as a lawyer." — *Sir George Adam Smith.* He may have been also a scribe, a copyer and preserver of the law. **And made trial of him.** He knew that Jesus associated with and befriended men of all kinds, and he hoped by introducing the subject of neighborliness to lead the Master on till he made some statement opposed to the exclusiveness and narrow bigotry on which the orthodox Jews insisted.

Illustration. "There is a story in the *Gesta Romanorum* of a king who lost his crown and his clothes; somebody stole them while he was in bathing. And when he

26. And he said unto him, What is written in the law ? how readest thou ?
27. And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbor as thyself.
28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right : this do, and thou shalt live.

---

appeared at the gate of his own palace his courtiers did not know him. They could not recognize a king except by a gold cap upon his head and a velvet cape upon his back. So it was here. Jesus was without social or ecclesiastical position, and the lawyer did not recognize his greatness." — *Dean Hodges.*

Saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? By " eternal life " the lawyer meant a condition of endless blessedness and not mere existence forever. " Inheriting " is to become assured of it in some positive and definite way, as by a legal bequest. " This is an age in which men are asking all sorts of questions ; but among all the questions which men ask there is not one half as important as that one which the lawyer asked. The time will come when this question will stare you in the face and not be denied an answer." — *Rev. F. N. Westcott.*

26. **What is written in the law ?** It was the lawyer's business to know the answer to his question, for it was in the Bible, and to teach that answer to others. **How readest thou ?** " This reply was in accordance with the Saviour's usual method (John 10 : 24, 25 ; Matt. 11 : 3–5 ; 26 : 63, 64). Each of these replies was characterized by a lack of assertion, by an appeal to the mind encouraging it to think the matter out for itself." — *Prof. George L. Raymond.*

27. **And he answering said.** " The lawyer shows himself not altogether unworthy of the name he bears ; for in answer to this appeal he quotes rightly Deut. 6 : 5 in connection with Lev. 19 : 18, as containing the quintessence of the law. That he should thus lay his finger at once on ' the great commandment,' by the Lord accepted as such (Matt. 22 : 35–40), showed no little spiritual discernment." — *Trench.* The first quotation was one of the verses included in the vellum slips worn by Jews on their foreheads and arms, the " phylacteries." **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.** With all thy affections. " How can we love an Infinite Being, a Being of ineffable splendor, Intangible, Uncreated ? Our minds stagger at the thought. But we know that we can love a flower. As we love whatsoever is lovely and pure and of good report, so we love Him who is the consummation of everything that is lovely and pure and good." — *Caroline Hazard.* Best of all, we love God when we love Jesus Christ our Redeemer. **And with all thy soul.** The soul is the individuality, the man himself, all that makes up his separate life. **And with all thy strength.** Thy physical force, bodily activities and powers. **And with all thy mind.** Thy mental powers, understanding, especially *moral* understanding. Words are heaped up so as to make sure of the meaning that *all* we are is to join in this love to God : it is to be the central aim and joy of our being. " We are here on earth to find out what love means : and all true love begins in the love of God who loved us." — *Canon H. S. Holland.* **And thy neighbor as thyself.** Seeking his welfare as earnestly as we seek our own. " Our affections are not only to be concentrated, in all their force, upon the Lord of this kingdom, but they are to be distributed far and wide, over the whole length and breadth of the dominion ; we are under command to love every brother-man equally with ourselves." — *Canon Holland.* " These two commandments were ' exceeding broad ' ; and the Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan made the second commandment broader still." — *Hesba Stretton.*

28. **Thou hast answered right.** The lawyer had expected to criticise and judge Jesus ; he finds the tables turned : it is Jesus who has judged and commended *him!* **This do** (perhaps pointing to the lawyer's phylacteries), **and thou shalt live.** " Who would not do the one thing which ensured life ? For it is life we all want : life in its manifold aspects, life with its changes and growth, life in its highest perfection, which calls and beckons us on to fresh endeavor, to fresh hope." — *Caroline Hazard.* There may have been " something in our Lord's tone or eye which, while his lips said, ' Thou hast answered right : this do and live,' said as plainly as words, ' You have not done it, and know you have not done it.' " — *Thomas Guthrie.*

II. **THE GREAT NEED OF NEIGHBORLINESS,** vs. 29–32. 29. **But he, desiring to justify himself.** " Our Lord made the lawyer's question seem so simple, needless, and foolish, that the lawyer seems to have felt embarassed ; and so, in

29. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor ?

30. Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way : and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

---

order to justify his first question, he asks another." — *Rev. F. N. Westcott.* **And who is my neighbor ?** " The question was wrong ; it revealed a wrong temperament of mind. Definition means limitation. If our Lord had said, ' *This* man is your neighbor,' the inference in the lawyer's mind would have been, ' Then that other is *not* my neighbor ; I can pass him by.' Jesus could only point the man right by taking him to a wholly different standpoint, namely, ' Be in your own spirit neighborly, and then every man will be your neighbor.' " — *Bishop Lang.*

30. **Jesus made answer and said.** He boldly lifted the discussion out of the realm of legal subtleties and casuistical refinements to which the lawyer would have confined it, and with his parable transported it out into the land of broad human sympathies. This is what Jesus always did with all questions. **A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.** " The descent is nearly four thousand feet through a mountain pass for a distance of about twenty miles to the bottom of the Jordan valley." — *New Century Bible.* " One of the most dangerous roads in Palestine, and one of the best-known. The men of our Lord's audience must have trodden this as pilgrims and knew that they would tread it again ; when the voices, so brave for argument in the temple courts and synagogues, would sink to whispers as the speakers hurried on, with robbery and wounds possible at every corner." — *Sir George Adam Smith.* " This had once been one of the most fashionable roads in the world. Jericho was the resort of rich people who built their villas there, as men to-day do at Bar Harbor or Newport or Tuxedo. Cleopatra had a villa at Jericho." — *Rev. Leighton Parks, D.D.* Then the currents of trade shifted from Arabia to Egypt, and this became a deserted road filled with bandits, just as many of the slum districts of our great cities were once the fashionable quarters. " This road leading downward to the Jordan valley followed the winding gullies, and was faced with frequently recurring caves, which for generations had been beset by thieves and cut-throats."— *President Martyn Summerbell, D.D.* **And he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him.** " So notorious had that road become for robbery and violence that it was called ' the red or bloody way.' " — *Marcus Dods.* **And departed, leaving him half dead.** " So late as 1820, on that very road, an English traveler was shot and robbed." — *Talmage.*

31. **And by chance a certain priest was going down that way.** " Perhaps one of the priests residing at Jericho, which was a great station of the priests and other functionaries of the temple." — *Trench.* Note that phrase, " by chance." No one can tell in advance who is to be his neighbor, or foretell what claims of neighborliness will appeal to him. He can be a true neighbor only by keeping his sympathies tender and holding his helpfulness ready for all emergencies. **And when he saw him.** " The wounded man was there — one of his own countrymen — one of those for whom he presented prayers and sacrifices, and whom he was to bless. But the priest did not think this man was his neighbor." — *F. D. Maurice.* **He passed by on the other side.** Doubtless he gave himself a plausible reason : perhaps he had to hurry to perform some service in the temple ! Of course Christ did not intend to oppose the religion of his people, for he was a loyal Jew ; but he did oppose empty forms under the guise of religion.

32. **And in like manner a Levite also.** " Doubtless the Levite will succor the needy and helpless, for this was one of his specific duties. He cannot plead excuse on the ground of other obligations, because his was the more secular office : the care of the temple, the oversight of the poor, the doing works of charity and mercy." — *President Martyn Summerbell, D.D.* **When he came to the place, and saw him.** There is no indication that he went any nearer than the priest had gone. **Passed by on the other side.** " Let not any of us believe that we have exhausted our debts to

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was : and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion,

34. And came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on *them* oil and wine ; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I. when I come back again, will repay thee.

---

our fellow men by the performance of our religious routine, or of the charitable fashions of the day. People of amiable temper and of benevolent intentions spend their whole lives in passing by their duty and other men's needs. ' Man,' says John Calvin upon this parable, ' was made for the use of man.' And you and I have not done our duty until we have brought our full manhood into the personal service of the needy and the suffering about us." — *Sir George Adam Smith.* This Levite also doubtless had excuses which he thought good. Why should he tarry in a place evidently so dangerous ? Why invite further violence ? He had his family to consider ! He was a valuable member of the community !

Illustration. " It is as if the English consul in some Italian port, in passing along the street, saw an Englishman being assaulted and in danger of his life, but instead of interfering turned into a side street, trying to persuade himself that the man was not an Englishman, or that the quarrel was not serious though he saw blood, or that the robbers were government officials securing a culprit." — *Marcus Dods.*

Illustration. " Once a small ship, dismasted and waterlogged, drifted a thousand miles on the sea, and its crew were in despair when a ship, carrying the flag of their own nation, bore down upon them. But, alas ! the captain only came near enough to see their wretched condition when he tacked and sailed away, leaving them to their misery. This happened a second time, the second ship also being of their own nationality. Finally, after death had claimed some of them, a Norwegian ship appeared, and these foreigners took the miserable survivors on board, carrying them away to their dear ones. — *Condensed from Rev. W. J. Townsend, D.D.*

III. **WHAT NEIGHBORS WILL DO,** vs. 33–37. 33. **But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed.** He was not a knight errant seeking heroic adventure : just a plain commercial traveler on a business journey. The Samaritans, inhabiting the central region of Palestine, were of a mixed race, descended from the Jews left in the land after the conquest and the Assyrian colonists imported by the conquerors. They opposed the rebuilding of the temple. They regarded the Pentateuch alone as their Bible. The Jews hated them and had no dealings with them. To this day about one hundred and fifty Samaritans exist in and around Nablus (Shechem), and maintain their old-time worship, treasuring their ancient copy of the Law.

Illustration. " Durand was one of Napoleon's great marshals. He was a child of the people and rose from nothing to high rank by sheer force of his personal courage and power. One day he was in a company of officers, several of whom were boasting of their great ancestors, when he spoke up saying, ' *I am an ancestor myself,*' which was surely the greater distinction. It is in his own personal worth that the Good Samaritan achieves commendation." — *President Martyn Summerbell, D.D.*

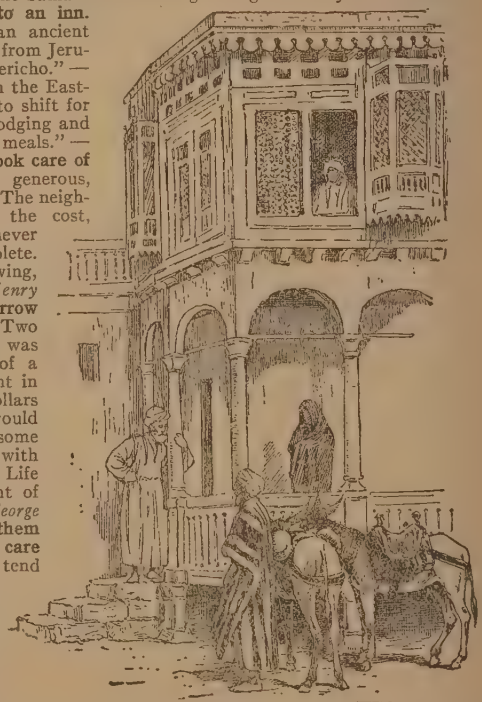
Came where he was. " The Jew slowly raises his eyes, and gazing into the stranger's face, sees what ? The face of one of the accursed race ; a heathen outcast ; a swinish wretch. Well, what of it ? Of course the Samaritan will kill him ; but even that would now be a kindness to him. So he snarls, and groans, and sets his teeth, cursing the Samaritan to his face, while he waits for the death blow." — *Rev. F. N. Westcott.* **And when he saw him, he was moved with compassion.** Just as it is often said that Jesus was moved with compassion when he saw the needs and sorrows of men. " Who is the Good Samaritan ? It was Jesus' portrait of himself. He let no race prejudice, he let no ecclesiastical orthodoxy, he let nothing stand in the way of helping the man who needed him because that man was nigh to him, being his own brother, being the child of his own Father." — *Rev. Leighton Parks, D.D.*

34. **And came to him, and bound up his wounds.** " No doubt with strips torn from his own garments." — *Trench.* **Pouring on them oil and wine.** These were common remedies throughout the Orient, the wine serving to cleanse the wounds and the oil to lessen the pain and heal them.

36. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?

"We, to whom Christ has given
The best gifts under heaven,
To heal the sick, and care for wounded hearts,
Do we take pains to save
Just half of what He gave,
Stinting the wine and oil which heal the sore that smarts?" — *E. H. Plumptre.*

And he set him on his own beast. It must have been a matter of great difficulty to get him there, and then the Samaritan was obliged to go afoot by the side of the beast. **And brought him to an inn.** "There are the ruins of an ancient khan now on the direct road from Jerusalem, about half-way to Jericho." — *Rev. E. W. Rice, D.D.* "In the Eastern inn guests usually had to shift for themselves, receiving only lodging and having to provide their own meals." — *New Century Bible.* **And took care of him.** "Neighborhood is generous, large-hearted, free-handed. The neighborly spirit never counts the cost, never measures duty, never leaves its work incomplete. It is abundant, overflowing, ample." — *Rev. George Henry Hubbard.* **And on the morrow he took out two shillings.** Two denarii. As the denarius was the ordinary day's wage of a laborer, this sum, equivalent in purchasing power to six dollars or more in our money, would take care of the man for some time "This story begins with a question about Eternal Life and ends with the payment of two shillings." — *Sir George Adam Smith.* **And gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him.** Give him food, tend his wounds, nurse him back to health. **And whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee.** The Samaritan did his good deed thoroughly; he "followed through." Many a piece of helpfulness amounts to little or nothing in the end because it stops too soon. "True charity is not content till it has thought out the real need in each case, and the best means of meeting it so as to prevent its recurrence. This parable, so far from encouraging, in truth rebukes haphazard, heedless, indiscriminating charity." — *Bishop Lang.*



An Eastern Inn.
Possibly like the one which was the scene of the Good Samaritan episode.

36. **Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?** "Who is my neighbor?" was the lawyer's question. Our Lord turns it around: "To whom are *you* a neighbor?" And the inevitable answer, after his parable, is, "To him whose need I relieve."

37. **He that showed mercy on him.** Note that the lawyer cannot bring himself to use the despised words, "the Samaritan," but answers with a grudging paraphrase. "Neighborhood is not a matter of geography but of humanity. Every man may

37. And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

have just as many neighbors as he chooses to make." — *Rev. George Henry Hubbard.* **And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.** "He must give up his pride as a lawyer, his pride as a Jew. He must understand that God cares for men, and therefore he must care for them." — *F. D. Maurice.* "There is no such thing as selfish Christianity. We might as well talk of cold heat. Nobody is a good Christian who does not ask, 'Who is my neighbor?' and get the question answered, and put the answer into practice." — *Dean Hodges.* "Go thou, go to those who have fallen among thieves of fortune, or of character, men stripped of raiment or of reputation, wounded in body or in soul, go thou to those in need of succor or of sympathy, with helping hands and hearty words and patient deeds and unfaltering benevolence, go wherever there is anything to be done for man or for God, in the church or in the world, with words or with wealth — go and do thou likewise." — *Prof. George L. Raymond.*

Illustration. "If you encountered a police official who carefully avoided all dangerous and troublesome interference, would you not be apt to challenge his right to retain his post? But might we not turn our challenge on ourselves, and say to ourselves, 'Why are you a Christian? What do you unite yourself to Christ for? Is it not that you may be able to do good, to be helpful, to become salt to the earth, and of exceptional value among men? If then you shrink from all exceptional duty, from all that calls for trouble and real sacrifice, from all that puts you seriously about, what is the good of your Christianity? Where does it go?'" — *Marcus Dods.*

Illustration. "The incarnation has made human nature itself sacred. The follower of Christ must therefore see in every man his neighbor. St. Francis was riding one day near Assisi when he was startled by a loathsome spectacle. A leper was seated at the roadside. For a moment he gave way to natural horror, till he remembered that he wished to be Christ's soldier. Then he returned and dismounted and went up to the poor sufferer and giving an alms kissed lovingly the hand which received it. Strong in his hard-won victory he rode on; but when he looked back there was no beggar to be seen; and therefore his heart was filled with unutterable joy, for he knew that he had seen the Lord." — *Bishop Lang.*

LESSON XII.— December 17.

JESUS AMONG FRIENDS AND FOES. — Luke 10 : 38—11 : 54.

PRINT Luke 10 : 38–42 ; 11 : 42–44, 53, 54.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you.*— John 15 : 14.

Devotional Reading : John 15 : 8–16.
Reference Material : Luke 2 : 34, 35.
Primary Topic : Jesus in the Home of His Friends.
Lesson Material : Luke 10 : 38–42.
Memory Verse : Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. John 11 : 5.
Junior Topic : Jesus among Friends and Foes.
Lesson Material : Luke 10 : 38–42 ; 11 : 42–44, 53, 54.
Memory Verse : John 14 : 23.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : Friends and Enemies of Jesus.
Topic for Young People and Adults : Christ's Methods of Dealing with People.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will receive sheets of paper divided into two columns headed "Friends of Jesus," and "Foes of Jesus"; also, "The Good Part," and "The Bad Part." In the first column, as the lesson proceeds, they will make a list of whatever made Mary, Martha, and Lazarus friends of Jesus and then of what will make themselves his friends, such as prayer, obedience, Bible reading, helping others. In the second column they will write a list of what made the Pharisees and scribes foes of Jesus, and what makes men to-day his enemies, such as pride, selfishness, obstinacy, hatred, dishonesty.

The Older Classes may be divided into

two parts, each with a leader. One division will picture, in every way the leader can devise, the Bethany home and what made it so attractive, the homes of present-day friends of Jesus, the work of Christ's friends to-day, and how we may enlarge the number of Christ's friends. The other division will set forth the causes of hostility to Christ, in his own day and in ours, and how these foes of our Lord are to be met and conquered. Each division will strive to make the most complete and effective presentation in the time allotted.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Probably in December of A. D. 29, the third year of Christ's ministry.

Place. — Bethany, a small town on the Mount of Olives, on the road to Jericho.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The village of Bethany.
The characters of Mary and Martha.
The essentials of the Christian as against the worldly life.
The fundamental differences between Christ and the Pharisees.
The defects of the Pharisees' religion.
Samples of Pharisaic formalism.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT : Friends and Enemies of Jesus.

I. JESUS AMONG HIS FRIENDS, Luke 10 : 38–42 ; 11 : 1–13.
Martha's serving.
Mary's good part.
Lessons in prayer.

II. JESUS AMONG HIS FOES, Luke 11 : 14–54.
Can Satan cast out Satan ?
Miracles refused.
The inside of the cup.
Woes upon Pharisees and lawyers.
Are we friends or foes of Jesus ?

THE LESSON IN ART.

"Christ in the House of Martha and Mary," painted by Giovanni da Milano (Florence), the Bassano family, Velasquez (London), Steenwyck (Louvre), Jouvenet (Louvre), Le Sueur (Munich), Siemiradzki, Paul Leroy, Schönherr, Hofmann.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Macfarland's *The Spirit Christlike*. Stimson's *The New Things of God*. Hastings's *Great Texts of the Bible* and *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*. Fürst's *True Nobility of Character*. Watkinson's *The Gates of Dawn*. Temple's *Rugby Sermons, Second Series*. McFayden's *The City with Foundations*. Morrison's *The House of God*. "Ian Maclaren's" *The Life of the Master* K. S. Guthrie's *The Ladder of God*. Watkinson's *The Education of the Heart*. William M. Taylor's *Contrary Winds*. *Poems:* "At Bethany," in Longfellow's *The Divine Tragedy*. "Martha" and "Mary" in George Macdonald's *A Hidden Life*. Quatrain by Crashaw.

LUKE 10 : 38. Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village : and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

I. **JESUS AMONG HIS FRIENDS,** Luke 10 : 38–42 ; 11 : 1–13. THE BETHANY HOME. "The home of the Gospels dearest to the Christian heart is that of Bethany, where the Master found a refuge from labor and persecution, and constant sympathy with Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. The family of Bethany will ever have a place in the heart of Jesus' disciples because they made a home for Jesus in the days of his ministry, and because they compassed him with tender offices of friendship during the strain of Passion Week." — *"Ian Maclaren."*

38. **Now as they went on their way.** "Jesus is on his way to or from a short visit to Jerusalem which Luke does not mention." — *International Critical Commentary.* **He entered into a certain village.** It was Bethany, meaning perhaps "house of dates," a little stone village on the southeast slope of Olivet, "north of the Jericho road, surrounded with fig-gardens and terrace-walls. The most conspicuous feature is the tall square tower in the center of the village, which belonged to the convent of St. Lazarus founded in A. D. 1147. A vault below, converted into a diminutive chapel, is shown as the tomb of Lazarus." — *C. R. Conder.* It is less than two miles from Jerusalem. Luke's failing to name the village is part of the reticence of Matthew, Mark, and Luke regarding the Bethany family because of the hostility of the Jews aroused by the raising of Lazarus from the dead. John, writing long after that event, and in Ephesus, could tell about the resurrection of Lazarus and name the town in his Gospel. **And a certain woman named Martha.** The name means "mistress," being the feminine form of *mar*, "lord." She is thought to have been the older of the two sisters, and Lazarus perhaps still younger than Mary. She was the "head of the house." **Received him into her house.** From the fact that Mary anointed Christ's feet at the house of Simon the Leper at Bethany, Lazarus being present and Martha serving the meal, it has been inferred that Martha was the wife or perhaps the widow of this Simon. Some also identify Simon the Leper with Simon the Pharisee and Lazarus with the rich young ruler.

39. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word.

40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving ; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone ? bid her therefore that she help me.

41. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things :

42. But one thing is needful : for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

---

39. **And she had a sister called Mary.** The Hebrew form of the name is Miriam, meaning, perhaps, " bitter." **Who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word.** " The ' also ' shows that Mary, too, in her way, was no less anxious to give Jesus a fitting reception." — *F. W. Farrar.* Learners sat at the feet of their teachers, as the young Saul sat at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22 : 3).

40. **But Martha was cumbered about much serving.** " Martha was determined to provide a fine entertainment on this occasion. She was doubtless a notable housewife, and, not unnaturally, a little proud of it ; and she had with her now her dearest and most honored Guest, and was bent on setting before him her best, and in her best style. It was a loving impulse on her part, and our Lord did not fail to appreciate it. All natures do not express their affection in the same way. What a blessed fact that our Master and Judge sees the love behind the differences, and tolerates the differences for the love's sake ! " — *Hastings.* " Our Lord delicately touches the defect of Martha in the word ' cumbered,' or, as it is given in the margin, ' distracted.' Simply, we must not allow legitimate cares to impair our full and free fellowship with our Master. It is here that so many of us err. The sisters represent two types, in themselves equally admirable ; as an old writer puts it, Martha is good before dinner, and Mary after. Happy the Christian who combines the two ! " — *Rev. William L. Watkinson, D.D.* **And she came up to him.** She probably bustled up, with some cooking-dish in her hand. **And said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone ?** " Martha seems to have been out of temper with the Master as well as with her sister, and to have implied some little reproach on him as well as on Mary. Why all this disturbance and irritation ? Surely it all came of this, that she was thinking more of serving Christ than of pleasing him."—*Rev. James Hastings, D.D.* **Bid her therefore that she help me.** " Our sympathies join with those of the world which for many centuries have gone out to the much-troubled Martha. Jesus was far from depreciating Martha's affection. It is expressly said, ' Now Jesus loved Mary and Martha,' as well as their brother Lazarus." — *Rev. Henry A. Stimson, D.D.*

41. **But the Lord answered and said unto her.** We can see the kindly light in his eye and the tender smile that played around his mouth. **Martha, Martha.** " The repeated name gives additional tenderness to the rebuke, as in Luke 22 : 31 ; Acts 9 : 4." — *Cambridge Bible.* **Thou art anxious and troubled about many things.** Never has there been a time in the world's history when men were so distracted with " many things " as to-day and in this country of ours. " Much time, and thought, and means are expended on the merest framework of life ; on house and dress ; on excursions and evening gatherings ; on useless accomplishments, and the acquirement of artificial manners and movements ; while what should gladly be our great subjects of thought, if we are honest in claiming to be immortals, are too often relegated to a narrow corner of the week." — *Rev. George H. Morrison, D.D.*

Illustration. When the allied armies entered Paris after the great battle of Waterloo, the British ambassador prepared a banquet for the Duke of Wellington. The lady of the house observed that the Duke talked much but ate little. So she called his attention to the fact that he was not eating. " No," said he, " no ! I don't care much about eating and drinking."

42. **But one thing is needful.** Some have thought that Jesus meant that only one dish was needed for the meal that Martha was preparing ; but his saying was on a higher plane. This one thing is love to Christ ; all else that is good and happy and useful will follow upon this. " What we are slow to know is that the inner fire, even when it has no outer service to set in motion, is still doing its appointed service, still preaches and teaches and inspires and upholds. Such lives are fountains of holiness,

and nothing else has equal value." — *Archbishop Temple.* "The one thing needful does not rob us of all other interests. The one supreme thing keeps other things in their proper place and colors the whole of life." — *Hastings.*

"O needful thing, O Mary's choice,
Go not from us away!
O Jesus, with the living voice,
Talk to us every day!"
— *George Macdonald.*

For Mary hath chosen the good part. The good part was intimate fellowship with Jesus and soul surrender to him. "Love seeks comradeship; and comradeship is both the fruit and the root of love. It is beautiful to think that our Lord, in his complete humanity, longed for that and responded to that which we find sweetest and best in our own life. In all the years to come, Mary was to carry as a treasure in her soul the memory of that hour. But also Mary's act bore testimony that she recognized what Jesus is in himself, and what he demands of every soul that will come to him finding life. Jesus emphasizes the one thing needful, which is the opening of the heart and the surrendering of the life with satisfying delight in its obedience to him." — *Rev. Henry A. Stimson, D.D.*

"In proportion as life's obligations have increased, the need of preparation is ignored. We need not only to act, but need to think; not only to do but to pray. There are human duties to be met and done. But there are likewise human graces to be gained and cultured. To cultivate the graces we need the life contemplative. If Jesus needed them, do we not need the hours on the mountainside and in the garden?" — *Rev. Charles S. Macfarland, Ph.D.*

"If the rational and sober care for the things of this world is counterbalanced by the care for the things of the spiritual world, and if the one thing needful is allowed to influence, control, and regulate our life and conduct, we shall have a Christian character tending to perfection." — *A. Fürst.*

Which shall not be taken away from her. "While Martha was preparing one meal, Mary was enjoying another; for the 'part,' 'portion,' of which Jesus speaks is the word used elsewhere for the share of a meal. Two banquets were preparing in that house; and Mary was already sitting at the table of her Lord in the heavenly world, partaking, at his gracious hand, of that bread of which he who takes shall never hunger again. This portion could never be taken away from her." — *Rev. J. E. McFadyen.*

"Behold a new thing here — host hanging on her Guest:
Preparing for his mouth, his mouth's words are her feast!
O Martha sister, spare thy labor and thy cost:
Tending the food that perisheth, diviner food is lost."
— *Richard Crashaw.*

"I cannot choose; I should have liked so much
To sit at Jesus' feet, — to feel the touch
Of his kind, gentle hand upon my head
While drinking in the gracious words he said.

"And yet to serve him! — Oh, divine employ, —
To minister and give the Master joy,
To bathe in coolest springs his weary feet,
And wait upon him while he sat at meat!

"Worship or service, — which? Ah, that is best
To which he calls us, be it toil or rest, —
To labor for him in life's busy stir,
Or seek his feet, a silent worshiper."
— *Caroline A. Mason.*

Lessons in Prayer (Luke 11 : 1–13). The surest way to cultivate friendship with Christ is through prayer, and we are indeed fortunate in having so many directions for prayer from Christ's own lips.

We learn from the famous passage including the Lord's Prayer that God is our Father. As we recognize his Fatherhood we come to realize that Christ is our Elder Brother.

We pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and true prayer involves work for the object of the prayer. There is no friendship equal to that which is cemented by labor toward the same end.

We are taught to pray for the accomplishment of God's will, and that is the chief aim of Christ. We become his friends when his will and desire become ours.

Prayer puts us into the attitude of trust, — reliance on God even for our daily bread. Christ's parable of the importunate friend shows us that God welcomes earnestness in our petitions. He wants us to know what we want, and to bring all our wants to him as one proof of the friendship which unites us with him.

Prayer teaches us to ask for small things, and also for large things. The larger the desire, the larger the friendship. The greatest of all petitions is that for God's

LUKE 11 : 42. But woe unto you Pharisees ! for ye tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over justice and the love of God : but these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Holy Spirit, and this is the prayer which God is most eager to answer, because the answering of it binds him to us and us to him in the most precious and abiding friendship.

II. **JESUS AMONG HIS FOES,** Luke 11 : 14–54. CAN SATAN CAST OUT SATAN ? With verse 14 Luke makes a sudden transition ; we now pass from the atmosphere of friendship and trust to the atmosphere of suspicion and enmity. This hostility showed itself first in the charge that only by partnership with Beelzebub, the supposed chief of the devils, could Christ drive out demons as he was doing. The idea seems to have been that Satan, in order to gain influence for his agent, allowed him to cast out a few demons ; thus would he easily persuade men to his evil will.

Our Lord's answer was entirely conclusive to any honest mind : Satan would not undo his own work, and I am constantly contending against Satan. Also, the pupils (" sons ") of the Pharisees claimed power to exorcise demons ; if their claim is true, do they also get this power from Beelzebub ? The Pharisees could not answer that argument.

MIRACLES REFUSED. Christ's critics required him to perform a " sign from heaven," that is, some miracle like Moses' pillar of cloud or fire or Elijah's fire falling from heaven upon the sacrifice. This, they argued, could not be brought about by Satan, and would be proof of Christ's claim to be the Son of God.

Reproduced from an old print.

Christ and the Pharisees.

Christ knew well, however, that no miracle would win men's hearts, however it might awe and dazzle their minds. He never relied on miracles, but on his tender words and his loving life. He worked miracles merely as the necessary outgoing of his love, and not as proof for critics. He foretold one supreme miracle, his resurrection from the dead (" the sign of Jonah ") ; in that he would combine all needed evidence of his divine Sonship and would convince all that could be convinced by miracles. This prophecy was gloriously fulfilled a few weeks later.

THE INSIDE OF THE CUP. Christ's open break with the Pharisees and scribes occurred at a meal to which a certain Pharisee invited him — not the regular dinner (*deipnon*) but a lighter meal taken earlier in the day (*ariston*). The Pharisees had added to the simple and wise Mosaic rules for cleanliness " a rigorous set of cumbersome and needless ablutions, each performed with certain elaborate methods and gesticulations. In a book of Jewish Ritual no less than twenty-six prayers are given with which their washings are accompanied." — *F. W. Farrar.* The Pharisee watched Christ sharply to see whether he omitted any of these ceremonies, and found to his horror that he omitted all of them !

Christ perceived the Pharisee's anger, and answered it. " You Pharisees," he said sternly, " are very careful to clean the outside of the cup ; but the inside is full of greed and wickedness." Christ called them " fools," and that is just what they were. Then he went on to condemn them with stinging words that they could not forget and never forgave.

WOES UPON PHARISEES AND LAWYERS. 42. **But woe unto you Pharisees.** The

43. Woe unto you Pharisees ! for ye love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces.

44. Woe unto you ! for ye are as the tombs which appear not, and the men that walk over them know it not.

---

woe that Christ announced was the natural and inevitable result of their hard hearts and their bigotry. " The Pharisees still exist as a party among Eastern Jews, and are called *Perushim*. So bad is their character that the bitterest term of reproach in Jerusalem is, ' You are a *Porish !* ' How little they have changed from their character, as Christ depicted it, may be seen from the testimony of a Jewish writer : ' They proudly separate themselves from the rest of their co-religionists. *Fanatical, bigoted, intolerant, quarrelsome, and in truth irreligious*, with them the outward observance of the ceremonial law is everything ; the moral law little binding, *morality itself of no importance.*' " — *Cambridge Bible.* **For ye tithe mint and rue and every herb.** To tithe is to set apart one-tenth for religious uses. The Mosaic law (Deut. 14 : 22) applied this to grain, but the Pharisees extended it to garden herbs, and even went so far as to discuss whether stalks should not be tithed as well as seeds. **And pass over justice and the love of God.** The law itself exalted these as the chief of all requirements, but they were quite forgotten by the Pharisees in their absorption in trifling legalistic details. " That Christ was not insensible to the mint, anise, and cummin of doctrine, to the jot and tittle of the law, is sufficiently clear ; yet he never forgot the due balance and proportion of belief and duty, and the weightier matters of the law were invariably the burden of his mind and discourse. Our Lord was intolerant of the cramped and chaffering Pharisee, who, analyzing the spark, forgot the sun ; who, absorbed in the chemistry of the rain-drop, lost sight of the sea ; and whose metaphysical enthusiasm about the atom made him blind to the universe." — *Rev. William L. Watkinson, D.D.* **But these ought ye to have done.** That is, loved God and done justice to men. **And not to leave the other undone.** Christ, it will be seen, did not condemn the principle of tithing, but accepted it, provided it was kept in its place as a practical means of filling the Lord's treasury ; but making a religion of tithing destroyed the very ends for which tithing was established. " Do the great things, and the smaller will follow in their train. Attend to the principle, and the exemplifications of it will come of themselves. Look well to the character, and the conduct will correspond thereto. Keep the heart, and everything flowing from it will testify to that vigilance." — *William M. Taylor.*

43. **Woe unto you Pharisees !** Christ was never afraid of repeating himself, and in this case he left no doubt of his meaning in the mind of any hearer. **For ye love the chief seats in the synagogues.** These chief seats were arranged in a semicircle facing the congregation ; they were back of the pulpit or reader's desk. **And the salutations in the marketplaces.** " The love of these Jews in the time of our Lord for exaggerated titles of respect and honor is well known." — *Pulpit Commentary.*

44. **Woe unto you ! for ye are as the tombs which appear not.** To touch a tomb would result in ceremonial defilement and the Jews whitewashed their graves as a warning to passers-by. If the whitewash was worn off, the rock-hewn graves might easily be touched without knowing. The Jews avoided the town of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee because it was built partly on the site of an ancient hidden cemetery. Christ compared the scribes and Pharisees with these tombs full of corruption which no one would guess on looking at them.

In verse 44 our Lord had joined the scribes with the Pharisees in his condemnation, which brought out an indignant interruption from a lawyer present (lawyers and scribes seem to have been almost interchangeable terms, though strictly the lawyer explained the law while the scribe copied it). " You are insulting us also," said the lawyer. Thereupon Christ repeated his woes and applied them to the lawyers, for they were as great oppressors as the Pharisees, aiding the latter to bind on the people the heavy burdens of a formal religion, slaying the prophets of one generation and building monuments to them in the next generation ! A key was the symbol of the work of a scribe, who had to unlock the meaning of the Bible ; " but ye lawyers," said Christ, " have taken away the key of knowledge." They would not themselves enter into the precious meaning of God's Word, nor would they let any one else in. No wonder that woes would come upon them.

53. **And when he was come out from thence.** The scribes and Pharisees followed him in their anger. **The scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon him vehe-**

53. And when he was come out from thence, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things ;

54. Laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth.

mently. Evidently the Pharisee's meal was given in order to catch Jesus in his speech, and our Lord appears to have been quite alone with his foes. **And to provoke him to speak of many things.** They cross-questioned him, harassed him with criticisms, flung insults at him. Our word " heckled " describes the process to which he was subjected.

54. **Laying wait for him.** They were like hunters lying in ambush ready to spring out on expected prey. **To catch something out of his mouth.** " Catch " carries on the metaphor of hunting. Perhaps it was such a company of heresy-hunters as we read about in Mark 12 : 13. Think of assailing the world's greatest Teacher in this way ! What a wonderful chance they missed ! Equal folly is shown by all the infidel critics of to-day.

ARE WE FRIENDS OR FOES OF JESUS? If we are Christ's friends, we shall obey his commandments, as he himself said. We shall love to be where he is. We shall sit at his feet in the beautiful communion of prayer. Mary's attitude will be our attitude. We shall do our work in the world with more than Martha's fidelity, because Christ will be doing it with us. We shall choose with all our hearts the good part, the one thing needful, and gladly pass by without missing them all of the world's good things that Christ may not think best for us.

The foes of Christ need not be violent antagonists of his. They may not rage openly against him as the scribes and Pharisees did. They may not even argue in opposition to his words and try to corrupt his followers with shrewd criticisms. Whoever is not for Christ is against him. All that are not his friends are his foes. To be among his enemies it is enough *not* to sit with Mary at his feet, *not* to choose the one thing needful, but instead to choose the numberless distractions of the world.

This lesson asks of every one that studies it the solemn question : *Are you a friend or a foe of Jesus Christ ?*

LESSON XIII. — December 24.

A LESSON IN TRUST AND PREPAREDNESS. — Luke 12.

PRINT vs. 16–31.

GOLDEN TEXT.— *The life is more than the food, and the body than the raiment.* — LUKE 12 : 23.

Devotional Reading : Luke 12 : 22–31.
Primary Topic . STORY OF A FOOLISH RICH MAN.
Lesson Material : Luke 12 : 16–31.
Memory Verse : Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Matt. 6 : 20.
Junior Topic : A FOOLISH RICH MAN.
Lesson Material : Luke 12 : 16–31.
Memory Verses : Matt. 6 : 19–21.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : RICH TOWARD GOD.
Topic for Young People and Adults : TRUE RICHES.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will probably take the Christmas lesson, but if they do not, make this a lesson the on Two Barns. One is the barn of the Rich Fool, the other the barn of the Wise Man. Have two barns made beforehand out of pasteboard, with big doors that can be opened. Write on slips of paper, as the class suggests, what the Rich Fool put into his barn : money, grain, work, care, forethought, stinginess, greed, and so on ; put these slips of paper into the barn one by one. In the same way fill the Wise Man's barn : work, thought, trust, kindness, generosity, joy, prayers, songs, and the like.

The Older Classes will study the entire chapter, gleaning its many lessons of trust and of single-hearted devotion to God. In advance assign the key verses of the chapter to different members of the class, asking each to bring in a present-day illustration and application.

Be sure to take time for the full expression of all these thoughts from the class.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — November or December of A. D. 29, the third year of Christ's ministry.

Place. — Somewhere in Peræa, the country east of the Jordan.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Comparisons of this chapter with similar passages in Matthew.
Bring together Christ's parables regarding wealth and gather up their teachings.
Christ's life an illustration of trust.
The birds of Palestine.
The flowers of Palestine.
Christ's use of nature in his teaching.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Rich toward God.

I. A WARNING AGAINST FOOLISH PREPAREDNESS, vs. 1–21.
   Relying on a pious exterior.
   Relying on worldly power.
   Relying on worldly wealth.
   Rich toward God.

II. A LESSON IN WISE TRUST, vs. 22–59.
   Trusting God for all good things.
   Ready always to give account to God.
   The blessedness of trust.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Works on the parables by Trench, Hubbard, Hesba Stretton, Rowlands (n *The Parables of Jesus*), Marcus Dods, etc. Charles R. Brown's *The Master's Way* and *The Quest of Life*. David Smith's *Man's Need of God*. Watkinson's *The Education of the Heart*. Robinson's *Studies in Luke's Gospel*. Maclaren's *Expositions*. McClelland's *The Mind of Christ*.

16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

I. A WARNING AGAINST FOOLISH PREPAREDNESS, vs. 1–21. During the World War the word "preparedness" came to have a new meaning; it was used most frequently with sole application to preparedness for war. The United States was caught almost wholly unprepared, and had to make its struggle under all the disadvantages of lack of material, of men, of plans, and of time. Peace advocates insist that preparedness for war is an invitation to war, which is in a measure true. On the other hand, if war is likely, unpreparedness results in an enormous waste of both money and men.

But the foolish preparedness against which Christ warned his hearers in our lesson has nothing to do with war. He referred to the preparations for happiness which men foolishly make, basing their plans on selfishness and worldliness. This preparedness is foolish because it is not in harmony with God's will, and therefore brings the opposite of happiness — misery here and eternal woe hereafter. Christ pictured three of these false reliances.

1. RELYING ON A PIOUS EXTERIOR. A vast throng of Christ's friends suddenly came together. The fierce attack which the scribes and Pharisees had made upon him seems to have summoned his followers to defend him. Our Lord seized the occasion to warn his disciples solemnly against manifesting such a spirit as his enemies showed. "They are hypocrites," said Jesus plainly. "Fair on the outside, deeply pious, scrupulous to a hair in all religious observances, in their hearts they are irreligious, cruel, selfish, hateful, revengeful. Beware of their spirit, for it means ruins in the end. Inside shall become outside. Darkness shall be light. Whatever is covered shall be revealed. Whispers shall be shouted from the housetops." No insincerity is to be relied upon for happiness. Thorough honesty, the same inside and outside, is the only preparation for eternal life.

2. RELYING ON WORLDLY POWER. The rapidly rising hostility to Jesus and his disciples prompted our Lord to speak of another false reliance of worldlings, namely, worldly power. They fear "the arm of flesh"; Jesus bids us fear nothing but sin. They dread physical ills, blows, imprisonment, crucifyings, beheadings; Jesus bids us fear only the death of the soul. Through the long centuries of bitter persecution that lay ahead, these verses were the strength of the church. Christ's followers were to be brought before magistrates and kings, but they were not to be anxious; they were only to make their brave confession of Christ, and he would care for them, in time and eternity. There is no security like his companionship.

3. RELYING ON WORLDLY WEALTH. 16. **And he spake a parable unto them.** This is commonly called "the parable of the Rich Fool." **Saying, the ground of a certain rich man.** There is no hint that he was a *bad* rich man. "It was *by God's blessing*

17. And he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?

18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods.

19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.

20. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?

---

that he became thus rich, which might have been a *real* blessing, if he had known how to use it." — *Alford's Greek Testament.*

Illustration. "There are investments of money that make us rich, not for a brief period, but for eternity. Look at Dr. Pearsons of Chicago, making money simply that he may invest it in struggling schools and colleges and other benevolent institutions, so helping numberless young men and women to a larger and more useful life. Every dollar he accumulates adds to his present soul life." — *Rev. George H. Hubbard.*

Brought forth plentifully. Christ wishes for all of his children the abundant life; he would have no one scanted in material blessings any more than spiritual.

Illustration. "'I think,' said an old gentleman toward the close of his busy and successful career, 'there are three questions which will be put to us on the Day of Judgment: Did you make all you could? How did you make it? What use did you make of it?'" — *Prof. David Smith, D.D.* That is, were you industrious? just? generous?

17. **And he reasoned within himself.** He was evidently a prudent man, in the habit of looking ahead,— a most commendable practice, if he had only looked far enough ahead! **Saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?** Thus a modern rich man is distracted over the difficulty of investing his money safely and profitably. "How real and bitter, in many ways and for various reasons, are the sorrows of success! The fortunate are objects of envy, the precariousness of riches torments, luxury breeds satiety, and the rich, the great, and the splendid are often more acutely and tragically wretched than the famished man œuvring for a meal. 'What shall I do?'" — *Rev. W. L. Watkinson, D.D.*

18. **And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater.** "To begin with, he made a mistake in thinking there was no place for produce except in barns. It is a fool's question to ask where one can stow away money; it is the part of a wiser man to ask how he can do God service with the use of it." — *Charles S. Robinson.* **And there will I bestow all my grain and my goods.** The rich man's barns should be the homes of the poor.

19. **And I will say to my soul.** "There is an irony as melancholy as profound in making him address this speech not to his body but to his soul." — *Trench.* The soul that all along he had neglected and abused. **Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.** "Even though he had been permitted to live the many years, he could not have expected to escape death. But what had he provided against that solemn event? Nothing, absolutely nothing!" — *Principal D. Rowlands.* **Take thine ease.** After many years of strenuous activity, a measure of ease is wise and commendable; but the best rest is a change of occupation, and the business of old men should be the happy use of their gains in the service of God. There is no ease or satisfaction comparable with that. **Eat, drink, and be merry.** "He left the soul out, for evidently he confounded it with the stomach." — *Rev. William L. Watkinson, D.D.*

20. **But God said unto him.** We are not told how, but in some way God told the rich man that he was to die at once. **Thou foolish one.** He was wise in matters of this world, but an arrant fool in his eternal interests. "His folly is fourfold: he forgets the Giver ('*my* fruits, *my* goods'); he greedily reserves all for himself; he imagines such things to be food for his soul; he forgets death, which is every day possible." — *Stier.* "The word for *fool* signifies one who does not perceive what is passing before his eyes. He stands in the midst of life like a senseless statue. He misses the proper significance of life." — *Prof. David Smith, D.D.* **This night is**

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

22. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for *your* life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.

---

thy soul required of thee. Note the sharp contrast: "this night" set off against the "many years" of the preceding verse; "thy soul required" set off against the "soul" of the preceding verse, easeful and feasting.

Illustration. "The gallant Wolfe felt it no hardship to be called home in the very moment of his triumph on the plains of Abraham. By his heroism that day he had gained something more than things. His riches were not such as he must leave to another, and he could exclaim, 'I die happy.'" — *Rev. George H. Hubbard.*

And the things which thou hast prepared. Here the folly of *unwise* preparedness is most clearly brought out. His preparations for many years of ease, the goal of so many years of toil and planning, are swept aside in an instant. It is the tragedy of millions of lives. Whose shall they be? "Shrouds have no pockets." The rich man must leave all his goods behind him, and very likely to persons that would quarrel over them and be better off without them!

Illustration. "'How much did he leave?' one man asked another as they took their seats in the car. 'He left all he had,' was the reply. If that were actually true, then his life was a tragedy." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.*

21. **So is he that layeth up treasure for himself.** "He who is rich *for himself*, laying up treasure *for himself*, is by so much robbing his real inward life, his life in and toward God, of its resources; he is laying up store for, providing for, the *flesh;* but the *spirit*, that which God looketh into and searcheth, is stripped of all its riches." — *Alford's Greek Testament.* **And is not rich toward God.** Rich in what God counts wealth, having laid up "treasure in heaven."

RICH TOWARD GOD. "He only is truly rich who is rich in God, who has made the eternal and unchangeable the object of his desires and his efforts. He in God possesses all things, though in this world he may have nothing; and for him to die will not be to quit, but to go to, his riches." — *Trench.*

"When a man sells his soul — and he never means to sell it — he not only pays the price but he loses the purchase." — *Prof. David Smith, D.D.*

"To be really rich there must be things to possess, and there must be the power of enjoying them; a blind man cannot be rich in pictures, a deaf man in musical instruments, nor a dead man in lands and money." — *Hesba Stretton.* The divine riches bring with them the power to enjoy them forever.

"A man's possessions obstinately stand off from himself. He may fill his shelves with the wisest and most elevating books, and yet remain illiterate; he may gather round him precious works of art, and be a clown and a boor; he may buy up a county, and be the smallest-souled man in it; he may erect a mansion which will last for ten generations, and may not have ten years of life or ten minutes of health to enjoy it." — *Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D.*

"Oh, a truce to this hard, wild contest with God! Cease to lay up treasures for yourself alone, when you might be 'rich toward God.'" — *Charles S. Robinson.*

II. **A LESSON IN WISE TRUSTING,** vs. 22–59. TRUSTING GOD FOR ALL GOOD THINGS. 22. **And he said unto his disciples.** Who may have asked for an interpretation of the parable. **Therefore I say unto you.** The "therefore" looks backward upon the parable just spoken: "Since worldly wealth is of so little real use, this follows." **Be not anxious for your life.** This does not forbid prudent looking ahead. **What ye shall eat.** "It does not require much food to maintain health and strength. John Muir takes a bag of bread, a piece of bacon, a handful of tea, and goes off in the Sierra Nevada Mountains for a month — and with all his exposure he abides in health and strength at a ripe old age. We have made eating unnecessarily difficult with elaborate dishes alike perilous to purse and to stomach." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.* **Nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.** There is no warrant in either use or beauty for the large amount of time, thought, and money spent by modern men and women on their attire. Dress reform is one of the most pressing of needs, on the ground alike of health and economy, to say nothing of morals and religion.

23. For the life is more than the food, and the body than the raiment.
24. Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap ; which have no store-chamber nor barn ; and God feedeth them : of how much more value are ye than the birds !
25. And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit unto the measure of his life ?
26. If then ye are not able to do even that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest ?
27. Consider the lilies, how they grow they toil not, neither do they spin ; yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

23. **For the life is more than the food.** Physical life is meant, which is more than the food that supports it. God gave us the first, and he may be trusted to give us the second. **And the body than the raiment.** The same argument applies to the body and its needful clothing.

A Raven.

24. **Consider the ravens.** This interesting and intelligent bird, almost two feet long, is widely distributed over the world, but is found nowhere in greater numbers than in Palestine, where there are at least eight different species. **That they sow not, neither reap ; which have no store-chamber nor barn.** "They fly about, keen of eye and strong of wing, seeking their meat from God. They live out their ravenhood, and God feeds them." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.* Men are intended to sow and reap ; and if thus they live out their manhood, God will feed them. **And God feedeth them.** In several passages the Bible speaks of God's care for the ravens ; see Job 38 : 41 ; Ps. 147 : 9. **Of how much more value are ye than the birds !** God has shown his greater regard for man by bestowing on him a body which is the crown of the material creation, a mind which can understand the wonders of creation, and a soul which can worship the Creator. God will not abandon a creature whom he has lifted so close to himself.

25. **And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit unto the measure of his life ?** A cubit was a foot and a half — only a little space compared with the long span of a human life. But the rich fool of Christ's parable could not with all his wealth lengthen his life by a single hour or minute.

26. **If then ye are not able to do even that which is least.** Extending one's life a minute would be a very little thing compared with maintaining it for seventy years or more, though of course *for us* the one would be impossible like the other. **Why are ye anxious concerning the rest ?** The argument is from the impotence of worry. "Anxiety only works on our own minds, racking them in vain, but has no effect on the material world, not even on our own bodies, still less on the universe." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

27. **Consider the lilies, how they grow.** "Lilies" is probably used here in a quite general sense, not referring to any particular flower. Thomson thought that a splendid iris called the Huleh lily, whose flower is dark purple and white and which grows near Nazareth, was the plant Christ meant. **They toil not, neither do they spin.** "The lily is not idle. It reaches down steadily with its roots into the soil that it may claim its nourishment. It opens its leaves to the rain and dew. It looks up into the face of the sun for the light and warmth needed for the flowering forth of its own inner beauty. It lives out its lilyhood." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.* **Yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.** Solomon's splendor is stirringly pictured in 1 Kings 10, the story of the coming of the Queen of

28. But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field, which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven ; how much more *shall he clothe* you, O ye of little faith ?

29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after : but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

Palestinian Lily.

Sheba. See also 1 Kings 3 : 13 ; Solomon's Song 3 : 6 – 11.

28. **But if God doth so clothe the grass in the field.** Palestine has 243 species of true grasses, but the Bible does not distinguish between these and other herbs. "Actual turf is practically unknown in Palestine, and grass seed is not artificially sown." — *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* **Which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven.** "Wood being scarce in Palestine, grass is commonly used as fuel." — *International Critical Commentary.* **How much more shall he clothe you.** We have a right to argue from God's perfect care for the smallest grass-blade that he will care perfectly for man on whom he has lavished his miracles of design. **O ye of little faith ?** "O men, how little you trust him !" — *Professor Moffatt's translation.*

29. **And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink.** "'What shall I eat ?' is a necessary question, but it is secondary. The primary question is, 'Am I worth feeding ? Is it important that I should be kept alive ? Does the world particularly need a man of my type ?'"—*Dean Charles R. Brown.* **Neither be ye of doubtful mind.** "A metaphor from ship tossing at sea : 'Waver not anxiously, be not tossed about with cares.'"— *International Critical Commentary.*

30. **For all these things do the nations of the world seek after.** "What is the difference between a heathen and a Christian, if the Christian has the same objects and treasures as the heathen ?" — *Alexander Maclaren.* "Jesus talks about worry as if it were a person, a soldier in armor, a tyrant, nay, as if it were Satan himself, something to be fought to the finish. When a man sets his heart upon a mere thing, something to eat, or wear, or live in, when he trembles at the thought of losing it, when he kills himself to keep it, Jesus says that man is a heathen. Care is a denial of God ; it is blank atheism."— *Rev. T. Calvin McClelland, D.D.* **But your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.** This is the best of all reasons for trust, the fact that God is our Father, that he made us, watches over us, knows all our needs, and loves us so deeply that he longs above all things to supply our needs.

31. Yet seek ye his kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you.

What more can we desire ?

31. **Yet seek ye his kingdom.** " The kingdom of God stands for that whole section of life which owns and obeys the sway and rule of the divine spirit manifested in Jesus Christ. And when any man seeks the kingdom of God by living out the law of his own being in personal and social terms he makes his quest of life successful." — *Dean Charles R. Brown.* **And these things shall be added unto you.** " If we can trust God to give us the kingdom, we may surely trust him for bread and clothes." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

READY ALWAYS TO GIVE ACCOUNT TO GOD. This rich chapter ends with an exhortation to preparedness. Day by day the Christian is to live in peaceful trust ; he is not to take *anxious* thought for the morrow. But he *is* to take thought for the morrow, thought full of faith and hope and love : he is ever to hold before his mind the certainty of Christ's coming. Our Lord is surely to return to this world again, in clouds of glory, in sternness of judgment, in gladness of mercy and reward. Every Christian is to be a faithful servant, ready at any time to give an account to his Master.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF TRUST. " Oh, I wish I could say something that would lead you to trust in my God ! I have trusted him for forty-five years, and there has never been a moment when I have regretted it." — *D. L. Moody.*

" With sails all set and filled with gentlest air,
I watch the ship glide peacefully along ;
No engine's throb, no toil of arm is there,
The might of God compels, unseen and strong.

" With toiling and with trials sore distressed,
O weary soul, learn nature's truth aright ;
Thy God will give thee of his perfect rest,
If thou commit thy weakness to his might." — *McLeod Harvey.*

" There is no better way to show our trust than to busy ourselves with the things He asks us to do. Trusting him to take care of his share leaves us at leisure from ourselves to do our share of the ' Father's business.' " — *Maltbie D. Babcock.*

Illustration. " There is a verse, Phil. 4 : 19, which I call the Christian's bank-note. Indeed, I had some ' banknotes ' printed with this verse inscribed thereon, and gave them out when making pastoral calls or to those seeking my study in times of distress. The verse reads : ' My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' Not all your wish, perhaps, not all your desire, but all your *need.* Notice the grammar of it, ' *My* God.' Notice the arithmetic of it, ' according to his riches in glory.' " — *A. T. Pierson.*

Illustration. " In my old parish of Tulliallan there was an ancient house which bore this inscription on its gable-wall :

GOD IS MY LYF, MY LAND AND RENT ;
HIS PROMIS IS MY EVIDENT :
LAT THEM SAY.

Can we make this confession ? " — *Prof. David Smith, D.D.*

THE BIRTH OF JESUS (CHRISTMAS LESSON).—Luke 2 : 1–20.

PRINT vs. 8–20.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.*** — LUKE 2 : 11.

Devotional Reading : Isa. 32 : 1–8.
Reference Material : Matt. 1 : 18–25.
Primary Topic : THE GIFT OF THE BABY JESUS.
Lesson Material : Luke 2 : 1–20. Print vs. 8–20.
Memory Verse : He loved us, and sent his Son. 1 John 4 : 10.
Junior Topic : THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR.
Lesson Material : Luke 2 : 8–20.
Memory Verse : John 3 : 16.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE BIRTH OF JESUS.
Topic for Young People and Adults : THE INCARNATION AND ITS MEANING.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The Younger Classes will take special interest in the lesson if the teacher places before the pupils a tiny Christmas tree, telling them that it is for the presents that they are going to give to Jesus, who has given them every good thing. But first we are to talk about how this Jesus came to earth. After the wonderful story has been told and reviewed, give each pupil a circle of some bright-colored cardboard with a wire hook to hang from. On each you will have printed the initial of something they are to give Jesus as a Christmas present : O for their obedience, S for their songs, P for their prayers, J for their joy, W for their work, St for their study, Pl for their play, T for their talk, and so on. Have the children guess, if they can, the meaning of each letter.

The Older Classes will review the story of the birth of Jesus in some new way. Some member of the class may read the beautiful opening passages of *Ben Hur*. Extracts may be read by another member from one of the standard lives of Christ describing the birth of Jesus — Geikie's, Farrar's, Edersheim's, etc. Another member may write an original story in the first person, as if he were the Bethlehem inn-keeper, or one of the shepherds, telling about the event. Another may read a Christmas poem, such as Milton's "Hymn on the Nativity." Still another may describe some of the famous pictures of the Nativity. Assign to one of your best speakers or writers the subject, "The Purpose of God in the Birth of Jesus."

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The traditional date of the birth of Jesus is December 25. He was born near the close of B. C. 5, the error in the calculation of the beginning of the Christian Era having been made by Dionysius Exiguus in A. D. 526.

Place. — Bethlehem, the town of Ruth and the birthplace of David, six miles south of Jerusalem.

Bethlehem Market Place.

THE ROMAN EMPEROR when Christ was born was the first Roman Emperor, the renowned Cæsar Augustus, whose reign (B. C. 31 to A. D. 14) was notable for splendor and power, producing the greatest writers of Rome and among the greatest in the world's history. The birth of Christ was by far the greatest event in his reign. "Any one who believes that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are in any sense a divne revelation and not mere dreams, will see in the birth of this little child the greatest event in human history."—*Rev. Joseph T. Gibson, D.D.*

THE GOVERNOR OF SYRIA at the time of Christ's birth was Quirinius, who was afterwards governor a second time. Some think that in B. C. 5 he was not governor but held a subordinate position. Judæa was part of Syria until A. D. 70. During the administration of Quirinius orders for a general enrolment, a census necessary for taxation, came from the Emperor. The Roman method was to register every one where he lived, but the Jews were allowed to follow their ancient custom of registering citizens only in their ancestral homes. For this reason Mary and Joseph, being descended from David, journeyed south for about sixty-five miles to Bethlehem.

"To Cæsar, the world consists of rich people and poor people, who may be made liable for tribute money and possibly for military service ; but in our Lord's more

searching census — the Lamb's Book of Life that is never out of date — the hungry and the thirsty are enrolled, the pure in heart, the heavy-laden, and the martyrs." — *P. Whitwell Wilson.*

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHRIST'S BIRTH were humble indeed, and were thus an accurate fulfilment of prophecy. The Bethlehem inn was crowded with others come on the same errand as Mary's and Joseph's, and they were refused admission. They turned aside, probably to one of the caves where St. Jerome spent so many years as a hermit, translating there the Bible into Latin (the "Vulgate" translation). The cave was used as a stable, and Mary, having given birth to Jesus, herself wrapped the Divine Babe in long strips of cloth after the fashion of peasant women, and laid him on the hay in a stone trough that served as a manger. Mangers are still sometimes used as cradles in the East, and limestone caves as stables; probably this was a stable belonging to the inn.

"Had Jesus been born in a palace or rich man's house, had he received instant attention and homage, then his birth had not corresponded with his after life, and it would not have been in keeping with himself. For he was to show unto all ages that the greatest force in life is not position nor wealth, but character, and that character is independent of all circumstances." — *"Ian Maclaren."*

BELIEF IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH "hinges upon the divinity of Jesus. If his entrance into the world is the coming of God in the flesh, and his mission is the wonderful revelation of the love of God to sinful men, then we find it fully as hard to believe that this greatest event in the world's history was marked by nothing that transcends the level of ordinary human experience as to believe the gospel record." — *Prof. William Bancroft Hill, D.D.*

"The birth at Bethlehem made babyhood a sacred thing; and so the very infancy of Jesus is a gospel." — *George Dana Boardman.*

THE SHEPHERDS who first learned about the wonderful birth were out in the fields near Bethlehem watching their flocks to keep off the wild beasts. To this day it is not uncommon for shepherds to tend their sheep thus even in winter. The sheep used in the daily sacrifices of the temple were pastured in these Bethlehem fields,— a significant fact when we remember that Christ, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed for the sins of the world. No wonder the first announcement of the great event was made to these lowly shepherds.

"To the west of the village, one is shown the field where the angels sang. It is needless to say that no one knows in just what field the shepherds were keeping their sheep. It is enough to know that this may have been the field. A similar field is assigned by tradition to Boaz and Ruth." — *Rev. William E. Barton, D.D.*

ANGELS attended the birth of our Lord, and his resurrection. He could at any time during his life on earth have summoned "twelve legions of angels" to his aid. No event of the world's history could have been watched so eagerly by the hosts of heaven as the birth of Jesus, and it is the most natural thing in the world that these supernatural beings should have manifested themselves at that time.

"It was meet that the first visitors to Bethlehem should come trailing glory from heaven, for the infant Jesus was himself a child of heaven, untouched with earth's sin and wearing the beauty of God. There may be a rush of angel wings to the cradle of every new-born child." — *Rev. James H. Snowden, D.D.*

THE GLORY OF THE LORD which shone upon the shepherds was the same as the heavenly light that led the Israelites through the wilderness and shone above the mercy-seat in the tabernacle and temple. The same glory shone around Jesus when he was transfigured. It blinded the eyes of Saul on the Damascus road. It dazzled John on the Isle of Patmos as he saw the vision of the glorified Saviour. To the eye of faith this splendor lies upon all the pages of the gospel story.

"Jesus was laid on the bosom of Mary as the gift of eternity. To the humiliation of his birth he descended from the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He was the Maker of his own cradle; for the great earth that received him, and rocked him into the peace of human sleep, was the work of his own hands." — *Rev. John T. McFarland, D.D.*

THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL who spoke to the shepherds, and the song of the host of angels which followed, was taken up by Jesus in his ministry, expanded, illustrated, enforced by his deeds, exemplified by his character, fulfiled by his death and resurrection. It was "good tidings of great joy" It was "glory to God." It was "peace on earth." It was "good will." It was "to all people." These words

became Christ's texts, the key-words of his ministry. We enter into the kingdom of God as we seek God's glory, receive his peace, practise his good will, and seek to extend his blessings to all the world.

Illustration. "It is related of a celebrated musician that, when asked to compose a national anthem for the people of another country, he went and lived with them, studied them from within, shared their poverty, became one with them that he might become one of them, and was thus, and only thus, enabled to express their feelings in his music. This is what God did at the Incarnation." — *E. E. Holmes.*

THE RESULT of these shining events was for the shepherds that they could not keep them to themselves. They became missionaries, as all must that receive the Christian message. They paid a visit to the wonderful Babe. They spread abroad the angels' words concerning him. They rejoiced and praised God, and all that heard them rejoiced and marveled with them. And Mary, the happy mother, cherished in her heart the divine secret, pondering over and over the glorious confirmation she had already received. No better — no more reasonable and natural and hopeful — beginning of the gospel history could be imagined than this which actually occurred.

"The picture fits the world's expectation, as well as the world's want, and so it is believable. More and more study make it at once a necessity and a certainty. This truth occurs amid surroundings so indicative of the common course of human life that all natural things are lifted into a new spiritual meaning, and the round world is another place since Christ came into it." — *Rev. D. W. Faunce, D.D.*

"This is he whom seers in old time
Chanted of with one accord;
Whom the voices of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word;
Now he shines the long-expected;
Let creation praise its Lord:
Evermore and evermore!" — *Aurelius Clemens Prudentius.*

LESSON XIV. — December 31.

REVIEW.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.
— LUKE 4 : 18.

Devotional Reading : Ps. 98.
Primary Topic : FAVORITE STORIES OF THE QUARTER.
Junior Topic : HOW JESUS WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.
Intermediate and Senior Topic : HOW JESUS BOUGHT UP THE OPPORTUNITY.
Topic for Young People and Adults : SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUS' MINISTRY.

Six different methods for conducting the review lesson are here given, suited to classes of different ages and capabilities. The teacher will select the form of review that is best suited to his class, or he may combine the features of two or more plans

I. A BLOCK REVIEW.

Prepare a number of wooden blocks (you will need thirty-six), one for each of the principal events in the part of Christ's life which we have studied. Instead of blocks you may use pieces of heavy pasteboard. Paint nine of them one color (or cover them with a colored paper); then make four of them another color, and eleven of them a third color, and twelve of them a fourth color. The last three colors are for the three years of Christ's ministry, and the first color is for his life up to the beginning of his public ministry. Then print on each block the name of the event for which it stands. The following events may be chosen:

1. Annunciation to Mary.
2. Birth of John the Baptist.
3. Birth of Jesus.
4. Visit of the wise men.
5. Flight into Egypt.
6. Childhood and youth at Nazareth.
7. Ministry of John the Baptist.
8. Baptism of Jesus.
9. Temptation of Jesus.

First Year.

10. First disciples.
11. First miracle (at Cana).
12. First cleansing of the temple.
13. Talk with Nicodemus.

Second Year.

14. Healing at the Pool of Bethesda.
15. Imprisonment of John the Baptist.
16. Jesus rejected at Nazareth.
17. The withered hand healed.
18. Calling of the Twelve.
19. Sermon on the Mount.
20. Centurion's servant healed.
21. Widow's son restored to life.
22. John the Baptist sends to Jesus.
23. Stilling the tempest.
24. Jairus's daughter restored to life.

Third Year.

25. Twelve sent forth
26. Death of John the Baptist.
27. Five thousand fed.
28. Jesus walks on the water.
29. Journey toward Sidon.
30. Four thousand fed.
31. Peter's confession.
32. Transfiguration.
33. At the Feast of Tabernacles.
34. Final departure from Galilee.
35. Seventy sent forth.
36. Jesus at the house of Mary and Martha.

The four colors may be green, red, white, and blue. The teacher may use the blocks in the following way First, arrange them on the table in the right order, asking two or three questions on each event as the block is laid down. If you use pasteboard, you may place upright before the class a long strip of wood and fasten the pasteboard pieces to it, in order, with tacks.

Next, the blocks will be mixed up and the class will call for them in the right order, thus reconstructing the list.

Next, each pupil will receive thirty-six squares of pasteboard or cardboard, and will mark them to correspond with the teacher's blocks. Let this be done from memory as far as possible.

Finally, the pupils will arrange their squares in the proper order, using for the purpose some lapboards which they or the teacher will have brought.

This review should serve to give the pupils a clear idea of the course of history thus far in Luke's Gospel.

II. A BANNER REVIEW.

This form of review, which is suited to the younger classes, is carried out with the help of the series of pictures on the quarter's lessons published by the publishers of this book, the W. A. Wilde Company, Boston. Each picture will be fastened like a banner to a stick, and there will be one or more for each pupil.

Call for the pupil having the picture for the first lesson, and while the picture is held before the class, ask a few questions on that lesson, bringing in the picture to illustrate what you are saying. The pupil holding the picture will answer the questions if he can; otherwise, the other members of the class.

The pictures may be given to the pupils as souvenirs.

III. CHRIST'S CHARACTERISTICS.

The older classes may profitably use the following form of review, which gathers up the lessons of the entire quarter to form one portrait of the Saviour. To this end divide the following subjects among the members of the class, each to write an essay or prepare a brief talk on his theme, keeping within his assigned portion of the time. Every topic will be treated in the light of all the lessons of the quarter.

1. Christ's Mission to the World.
2. Christ's Helpers and How He Used Them.
3. Christ's Divine Power and How He Exercised it.
4. Christ's Methods of Teaching.
5. Christ's Love in Its Many Manifestations.
6. Christ's Courage and How He Showed It.
7. Christ's Foes and His Dealings with Them.
8. Christ's Pity for Sinners.
9. Christ Passing through Human Experiences.
10. Christ as a Missionary and an Organizer.
11. Christ's Relation to the Father.
12. Christ's Preparation for the Climax of His Life.

IV. A TEST FROM OUTSIDE.

As a special stimulus to home study, invite your class to choose by ballot some competent person outside the class who will examine them on the quarter's lessons by preparing a set of questions which they will answer in writing on review Sunday. You may suggest several names from which they may choose. Urge the class to put in all the time they can during the week studying on the lessons of the quarter, so as to do themselves credit in the examination.

Make this really an independent test from outside, such a test as the pupils will constantly meet in the experiences of life. Remind the questioner, however, that he is to confine himself to the first twelve chapters of Luke, and, if yours is a younger class, to the portions of those twelve chapters printed in the quarterlies, together with the facts relating to Christ's life in general which pupils of that age may reasonably be expected to know. Also, having in view the time limitations, request him to make his questions such that they will not call for very long answers.

V. A MAP REVIEW.

This form of review calls for an outline map of Palestine, large enough to be seen by all the class, and mounted on a board. It may be home-made, and it should extend to Egypt. The events of the quarter's lessons should be printed on little banners borne on large pins, each of which will be stuck into the map at the place where the event occurred, and in the order of the events. As the banner is placed, ask a few questions on the event. When all are in place, join the pins with cords, a cord of a different color for each of Christ's journeys. After this is completed, review a second time by asking such questions as "Where did the transfiguration occur?" Then review a third time by asking such questions as "What events of Christ's life occurred at Capernaum?"

VI. A TOURNAMENT OF FACTS.

To prepare for this review appoint two leaders and have them "choose sides," dividing the class between them. Each division will meet separately during the week to study. Explain in advance the plan for the tournament, and explain clearly what kinds of facts may be brought to the contest: facts regarding persons, places, times, events, and quotations. These are all to be committed to memory, since the divisions are not to bring papers to the tournament.

The leader of one side will begin by giving a fact from the quarter's lessons. He may say, "Christ's temptation took place in the wilderness of Judæa" (place); or, "Matthew was a tax-collector" (person); or, "Jesus began his ministry in the spring of A. D. 27" (time); or, "John the Baptist rebuked Herod Antipas for his sins" (event); or, "Jesus said, 'Consider the lilies, how they grow'" (quotation). He will give only one fact, and then the leader of the other side must respond with a fact — any one of the five kinds. Thus the sides alternate, the members of each side taking turns. When a pupil is at a loss, any member of his side may give a fact for him, the leader designating who is to speak so that two shall not speak at once. If a side fails, the other side has a chance. The side that gives the most facts is the victor. No fact may be repeated, of course, and inaccuracy in a statement will make it count as only half a fact, or, if it is wholly wrong, as no fact at all! The defeated side may be required to give a class social.

INDEX.

Subject	Page
Abanah and Pharpar	71
Ahab, a weak king	24
Ahab, king of Israel	46
Ahaziah's messengers	53
Alabaster cruse	332
Alcohol judged	214
"A light that burst the concave sky!"	57
"A little in Christ's hand goes far"	154
"Almighty God, as now we raise"	78
Ambitions	245
Amos Warns Israel	88
Angel chorus at Bethlehem	291
Angelic appearances	284
Angelic defenders	78
Anna in the temple	291
Anointing	311
Armor	263
Asaph, Sons of	230
Asa Relies on God	104
Asherah	98, 107
Astarte worship	25
Athaliah	114
A. T. Stewart's employee (illus.)	26
Babylonian education	202
Baldwin's kind act (illus.)	66
Banner review	373
Baptism of the Spirit	301, 302
Baruch the scribe	170
Beatitudes	325
Bedchamber	114
Beer-sheba and Elijah	40
"Behold a new thing here"	360
Belshazzar the king	209
Bethany	358
Beth-el	20, 69
Bible discovered to-day	160
Bible divided (illus.)	174
Bible enemies	174, 175
Bible in our lives	162
Bible purpose	172
Bibles lost to-day	158
Bible study: why?	267
Bible study: how?	268
Bible study: results	271
Birth and Childhood of Jesus, The	288
Birth of Jesus, The	369
Birth of John the Baptist, The	281
Blind pilot (illus.)	79
Block review	373
Boers and British (illus.)	80
Boldness in the righteous cause	242
Book of remembrance, God's	277
"Build a little fence of trust"	112
Calls and answers	140
Cannon balls become church bells (illus.)	144
Capernaum	316
Carites	115
Carmel, Mount	33
Centurion's servant healed	331
Character-story review	280
Chariot of fire	57
Chariots	109
Chart reviews	191, 280
Cherith, the brook	26
Choice of three sins (illus.)	210
Christians to be heralds	347
Christmas Evans (illus.)	138
Chronicles, Books of	105
Chrysostom and Eudoxia (illus.)	39
Church and country, Love of	252
Churches beautified	121
"Come not in flashing storm"	42
Conductor's electric light (illus.)	137
Confessing to God	254
Confession of Peter	346
Contribution-boxes	122
Co-operation	263
Coronation ceremonies	117
Courses of priests	284
Cries of prophecy (illus.)	85
Crop requiring a century (illus.)	21
Cupbearers	256
Cyrus king of Persia	224
Dan	20
Daniel and the Lions	215
Daniel Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's Dream	200
Daniel's education and writings	201
Davenport's candles (illus.)	54
Demon-possession	316
Denarius	356
Devil's reality	305
Disciples chosen	325
Disobedience and its results	187, 189
Disobedience, Penalties of	100
Divination	100
Division of labor	258
Doctors in the temple	293
Dothan	76
Double portion	56
Downfall of Israel, The	94
Downfall of Judah, The	183
Draught of fishes	317
Earthquake tremors (illus.)	55
Easter Lesson	125
Ebed-melech the Ethiopian	181
Edinburgh Castle captured (illus.)	40
Elisabeth	283
Elijah's Challenge of Baal Worship	30
Elijah's Flight and Return	38
Elijah in Naboth's Vineyard	45
Elijah Taken Up into Heaven	52
Elijah the Tishbite	22
Elisha and Naaman the Syrian	66
Elisha and the Shunammite Woman	59
Elisha consecrated	44
Elisha's Heavenly Defenders	74
Eloth	128
Enemies loved (illus.)	327
Enemies of the good	262
Engines of warfare	130
Esther, Book of	236
Esther Saves Her People	235
Evening sacrifice	35
Evils, how to fight them	38
Exile and the Restoration, The	279
Ezekiel's life and writings	193
Ezekiel, the Watchman of Israel	192
Ezra's Bible-reading	266
Ezra's commission	245
Ezra, his book	223
Ezra's life	244
Failures conquered	151
Faithfulness rewarded	57
Faith in the unseen (illus.)	78
Faith's touch	343
Faith's triumphs	221
"Fan in his hand"	301
"Farewell, my Loneliness!"	27
Fast for forty days	305
Fasting	85
Favorite-stories review	102
Fever cured	317
Fidelity to religion (illus.)	217
Fighting all along the line (illus.)	154
First Return from Exile, The	221
Five-point contest	103
Five thousand fed	346
Forgiveness of sins	320

Subject	Page
Fortifications of Jerusalem	129
Friends brought to Christ	322
Friends or foes of Jesus	363
Gabriel	286
Gadarene demoniacs	340
Gath	91
Gehazi	63, 74
Gilead country	24
Gilgal	54
Girdles	145
Giving, Bible principles of	275
God's house and its meaning	232
God's house, Love for	234
God's servants in distress	180
God's world kingdom	207
Golden calves of Jeroboam	20
Golden rule in daily life	327
Golden text review	190
"Go, to the world return"	43
Gough's call (illus.)	195
Gourd, Jonah's	87
Grass in Palestine	368
Greed, its folly	47
Haggai and Zechariah	233
Hagiographa	236
Haman	237
Hamath	91
Hanani	251
Handwriting on the Wall, The	208
Hard tasks to which we are called	196
Hebrew history through Solomon	14
Helpers found	211
Hezekiah Leads His People Back to God	148
Hezekiah's reign	156
High places	97
Hilkiah's Great Discovery	155
Historical review	191
Holiness of God	138
"Holy Bible Book divine"	271
Home-mission work	351
Hospitality	61
"How Ahab longs!"	49
"How oft do they their silver bowers leave"	78
Huldah	161
Humility (illus.)	213
"I cannot choose; I should have liked so much"	360
"If I can live to make some pale face brighter"	66
Imbecile aroused (illus.)	65
Incense-burning in the temple	131
Incense offered	284
Industrial unrest	21
Influence (illus.)	21
Ingersoll and McCabe (illus.)	125
"In the great world there are no accidents"	227
"In the monarch's cheeks a wild fire glowed"	210
Ireland and America (illus.)	33
Iron door closed (illus.)	51
Isaiah's career and teachings	135
Isaiah's Summons and Response	134
Isaiah's Ideals for a World at Strife	141
"Is it well with the child?" (illus.)	62
Israel, Kings of	96
"It lies around us like a cloud"	77
Jehoiada	116, 120, 127
Jehoiakim Tries to Destroy God's Word	169
Jehosheba	114
Jehovah's Mercy to a Heathen City	80
Jeremiah Cast into Prison	176
Jeremiah's life and writings	162
Jeremiah Speaks Boldly for God	162
Jericho road	354
Jeroboam	16
Jerusalem besieged	185
Jerusalem laid waste	187
Jezebel, her origin and character	24
Jezebel, wife of Ahab	46, 47
Jesus among Friends and Foes	357
Jesus, his education	295
Jesus Sending Out Missionaries	344
Jesus Tempted	303
Jesus the Friend of Sinners	330
Jesus the Great Missionary	336
Jesus the Great Physician	315
Jesus the Great Teacher	323
Joash	113
Johnson's repentance (illus.)	40
John the Baptist, his youth	287
John the Baptist sends to Jesus	331
Jonah, Book of	81
Jonah, the prophet	82
Josiah	158
Judah's Prosperity and Adversity	190
Juniper bush	40
Justice to all	94
Kings, Books of the	15
Kishon, brook	37
Knox and the queen (illus.)	39
Lamb, Anecdote of (illus.)	289
Law founded by Hilkiah	159
Leper cleansed	317
Leprosy	68
Leprosy of Uzziah	132
Lesson in Trust and Preparedness, A	363
"Let the King's business be our first endeavor"	26
"Let thy day be to thy night"	270
Levites	246
"Like a bright candle held at cottage door"	31
Lilies	367
Lions kept by kings	218
Locusts	275
Lord Preserves Joash, The	112
"Lose this day loitering"	121
Love of Joash for God's House, The	119
Luke and his Gospel	282
Luther's courage (illus.)	25
Magi's visit	291
Malachi's book	273
Malachi to John the Baptist	278
Manasseh's repentance	157
Mantle of Elijah	24, 56, 58
Map review	374
Martha	359
Mary Magdalene	338
Mary of Bethany	359
Memory of God	225
Message of Malachi, The	272
Ministry of John the Baptist, The	296
Missionary teaching	339
Moderation (illus.)	17
Monk's right hand (illus.)	65
Moravian missionaries in Greenland (illus.)	42
Mordecai	237
Mount Carmel	62
Naaman	67
Naboth	47, 48
Nazareth	294
Nazirites	285
Nebuchadnezzar's reign	203
Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem	257
Nehemiah's Prayer	250
Nehemiah's writings	251
Nineveh	84
No room in the inn	290
Obadiah, an unwilling messenger	31
"O loving, open hands that give!"	65
Opportunity	22
Painter and picture (illus.)	328
Palsy	318
Passing by on the other side (illus.)	355
Passing through the fire	100
Passover of Hezekiah	150
Peace conditions	147
Penknife	173
Petitions in prayer	255

Subject	Page
Pharisaic Sabbath laws	324
Phylacteries	353
Picture-house review	279
Pillars	107
Portrait review	190
Power-room (illus.)	43
Prayer and business (illus.)	51
Prayer and heathenism	35
Prayer and its answer	223
Prayer and power	257
Prayer, Instant in	255
Prayer lessons	360
Prayer of Nehemiah	253
Pride	18, 93, 133
Prohibition, its results	313
Prohibition, its spread	315
Promises, Foolish (illus.)	218
Promises pleaded	254
"Proud disputants for power"	69
Providence of God	227
Providences and thanksgiving (illus.)	129
Pulling down the stars (illus.)	37
Purim, Feast of	243
Quarantania	304
Question-picture review	102
Question tournament	191
Rainbow review	279
Ravens	367
Ravens or Arabs	27
Rebuke of wrong	168
Reform needed	303
Reforms thoroughgoing	158
Reforms, Wise methods of	155
Rehoboam	15, 105
Religion calling	153
Religious teachers	247
Religious training of the young	296
Repentance. Fruits of	300
Respecting the rights of others	52
Results of little deeds (illus.)	63
Reverence (illus.)	137
Revolt of Jeroboam	13
Richard's sword (illus.)	63
Rich fool	365
Rich toward God	366
Ridicule	260
Rimmon	73
Roll of the book	196
Sackcloth	85, 86
Safety of God's servants	182
Salutations by the way	347
Samaria	91
Samaritans	232, 355
Sanballat	260
Satrapies	216
Saving our youth	115
Scorpions, Chastizing with	18
Seals	48, 219
Second Return from Exile, The	243
Second temple	229
Selfishness, Cruelty of	46
Selwyn and Patteson (illus.)	61
Serpents in Palestine	146
Seventy sent forth	347
Seventy years	222
Shunammite woman	60
Simeon in the temple	291
Sinners at sea (illus.)	83
Sinners called to Christ	323
Sinners helped by Christ	336
Social-teachings review	102
Solomon's temple spoiled	138
Son of man	194
Son of the widow of Nain healed	331
Sons of the law	292
Sorrow and joy	270
Sorrow healed by Christ	332
"Speak, gracious Lord, speak ever thus"	42
"Sport of the changeful multitude"	200
Staff of Elisha	63
"Stern prophet, in thy blindness"	88
Story of the Good Samaritan	351
Succession kept up	58
Success, its secret	264
Summary review	279
Sun-images	107
Support of the temple	120
Sycomore tending	89
Symposium of Luke and Plato	335
Syrian war	75
Tarshish	82
Teaching methods of Jesus	329
Teaching the Law of God	264
Tekoa	89
Temperance	93, 133, 208, 312
Temple Rebuilt and Dedicated, The	228
Temple utensils returned	226
Temptations mental	307
Temptations physical	306
Temptations spiritual	309
Test from outside	374
"The bearers are unsteady"	319
"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose"	308
"The drivers were angels on horses of whiteness"	57
"Then let no doubt your mind assail"	29
Three-questions review	190
"Thus, like the weeping Shunammite"	64
Tithes	274, 362
Tishbe and Elijah	24
Tobacco evil	313
Tobiah	260
Tombs which appear not	362
Tournament of facts	374
Transfiguration	346
Trees and idolatry	98
Trials of the faithful	220
Truth, Loyalty to it	178
Trust funds (illus.)	123
Trust in God	111
Trusting God above all	248
Trust, its blessedness	369
Turner's pictures (illus.)	79
Twelve sent forth	345
Utensils of the temple	124
Uzziah's Pride and Punishment	126
Vashti	236
Virgin birth	371
Visions of God (illus.)	136
War, its waste	142
Warning others	199
Water Gate	265
Whale of Jonah	83
"When Satan and his host appear"	79
Whittier's room in Boston (illus.)	60
"Why should we doubt his care or grace"	225
Wife's influence	48
Wilderness of Judæa	298
Winter-house	173
Withered hand, Man with the	325
Wolf and lamb (illus.)	146
Women and Christianity	338
Work wholehearted	259
World-wide Prohibition	310
Xerxes and his palace	239, 241
Zacharias	283
Zarephath	28
Zedekiah punished	186
Zerah the Ethiopian	109

PELOUBET'S
Uniform Graded Quarterlies

The Illustrated Senior Sunday-School Quarterly

In addition to the Explanations of the Text, Practical Hints, Helpful Thoughts, References to Books and Pictures, Lesson Hymns, Subjects for Discussion, Suggestive Questions, Questions for Review, Maps, Music, etc., the *Illustrated Sunday-School Quarterly* has:

1. — Three pages devoted to each lesson.
2. — A beautiful half-tone picture, illustrating the lesson, from some work of the great masters.
3. — Additional illustrations, suggestive thoughts, explanations, and applications to daily life, awakening thought and stimulating the mind to deeper study.

Price, 10 cents a number; 40 cents a year

The Intermediate Sunday-School Quarterly

In the preparation of this Quarterly the Editor succeeds admirably in drawing from the Scripture narrative just those doctrinal, educational, and spiritual lessons that are most needed by boys and girls.

The questions awaken thought and enable the intellect to grasp readily the salient points of the lesson text.

The illustrations, maps, lesson hymns, and order of service are each the best of its special class and make this the best possible Quarterly for scholars of the Intermediate grade.

Price, 10 cents a number; 40 cents a year

The Home Department Quarterly

Our Home Department Quarterly is made with the same care as the other grades of our series and is so arranged that space is left for written answers to all leading questions. Besides, each lesson has a full page of Helpful Notes, making it, we believe, all that could be desired for a Home Department Quarterly.

Price, 10 cents a number; 40 cents a year

The Junior Sunday-School Quarterly

The making of a successful Children's Quarterly is conceded by publishers and authors alike to be the hardest problem of this teaching age.

To interest, instruct, and train a child's mind all at once is indeed worthy of the greatest effort, and can be successfully done only by those whose training as well as natural ability and inclination lead them to such work.

The author is recognized everywhere as a leader among primary teachers, and this Quarterly is her best work, and reveals the source of her power as a teacher. It is unqualifiedly the best primary Quarterly ever published.

Price, 8 cents a number; 32 cents a year

The Teacher's Edition of the Illustrated Senior Sunday-School Quarterly

This Quarterly is prepared in order to give the teacher additional explanatory and illustrative material bearing upon the lessons for his use alone, it not being furnished in the regular edition for the scholar. The use of this Quarterly has proved to be of great help in very many schools where the teacher, through lack of time or training, finds himself unprepared for the teaching of older pupils.

Price, 15 cents a number; 60 cents a year

The Teacher's Edition of the Intermediate Sunday-School Quarterly

This teacher's assistant is remarkably helpful, especially to the younger teachers, who are often called to this service with little if any training. The right teaching of the best thoughts of the lesson is clearly suggested, and any teacher of fair ability can, with this Quarterly at hand, do superior work in the class.

Price, 15 cents a number; 60 cents a year

The Junior Teacher's Quarterly

Primary teachers will find this Quarterly an invaluable supplement to their work. The blackboard suggestions on each lesson have received a large number of commendations, as they are simple, and can be easily followed. We believe this feature of the book will be of immense service in blackboard work.

Price, 15 cents a number; 60 cents a year

Little Ones' Quarterly

These picture lesson cards (one for each Sunday) are beautifully lithographed in bright colors, making them very attractive for the little ones. Each lesson has a little talk by the Editor which explains and simplifies the text. As the cards are intended for the use of the smallest children attending Sunday school, the questions and answers are made with that fact in mind.

Price, 4 cents a number; 16 cents a year

Lesson Leaves (Senior Grade)

A separate lesson leaf for every Sunday in the year.

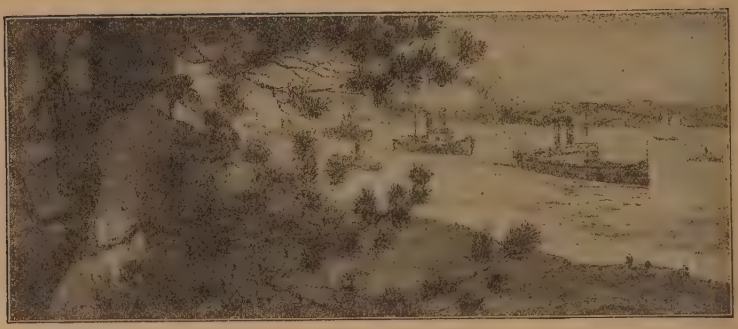
Price, $1.00 per 100 per month; $12.00 per 100 per year

*****Subscriptions for any of the Quarterlies in this series taken for three, six, or nine months, at yearly rate.**

Order of Opening and Closing Service for the Sunday School

with music, responsive readings, Apostles' Creed, Beatitudes, Ten Commandments, etc.

Price, $1.00 per 100 copies



New Books for Young People

From Tenderfoot to Golden Eaglet

A Girl Scout Story. By Amy E. Blanchard.

A real Girl Scout Story for every girl whether a Scout or not. Full of life and fun from beginning to end. A true glimpse into the thoughts, efforts and activities of a genuine Scout Patrol. 317 pages

Postpaid price, $1.75 each

The Young Wireless Operator—as a Fire Patrol

Being the story of a young wireless amateur who made good as a Fire Patrol. By Lewis E. Theiss.

Interesting to young and old alike. The former will find interesting and thrilling experiences such as any two wide-awake young amateur wireless boys might have, while older readers will enjoy the beautiful description of the great out-of-doors world which Mr. Theiss loves so deeply, and which he knows how to paint so well. 352 pages.

Postpaid price, $1.75 each

Sailing Under Sealed Orders

A Story of the Navigator of the "Greenville." By Commander Thomas D. Parker, U. S. N. (Retired.)

"Sealed orders" always sends a thrill through every "Jackie." "What Port" and "What's up" are two principal questions asked. The author knows what boys like and Uncle Sam's Navy is an open book to him. 286 pages.

Postpaid price, $1.75 each

Hiking Westward

Being the Story of two Boys whose ambition led them to face Privations and Hardships in their Quest of a Home in the great West. By Roger W. Conant.

To make a home for their mother fired two boys with an ambition and endurance which no hardships could lessen or weaken. It's a true picture of the opening of the Great West.

Postpaid price, $1.75 each

Noel and the Little People of the Woods

Beautifully illustrated by colored and line pictures by the author, Nellie M. Pairpoint.

Did you ever listen to the little people of the woods and forests as they tried to talk to you? The author has and knows what they say. Noel didn't at first but he, too, learned and was glad he did.

Postpaid price, $1.00

Cloth bound *Each volume is fully illustrated* *All prices are Net*

Good Books for Boys and Girls

Stories on Scouting and Out-of-Door Life

By W. P. EATON

The Boy Scouts of Berkshire
The Boy Scouts in the Dismal Swamp
The Boy Scouts in the White Mountains
Boy Scouts of the Wildcat Patrol
Peanut — Cub Reporter
Boy Scouts in Glacier Park
On the Edge of the Wilderness
A Girl Scout of Red Rose Troop By Amy E. Blanchard

Price, $1.75 each, net

Stories of Camp Fire Life

By AMY E. BLANCHARD

The Campfire Girls of Brightwood
Fagots and Flames
In Camp with the Muskoday Campfire Girls
Lucky Penny of Thistle Troop

Price, $1.75 each, net

Stories of Wireless Telegraphy

By LEWIS E. THEISS

The Wireless Patrol at Camp Brady
The Secret Wireless
The Hidden Aerial
The Young Wireless Operator Afloat

Price, $1.75 each, net

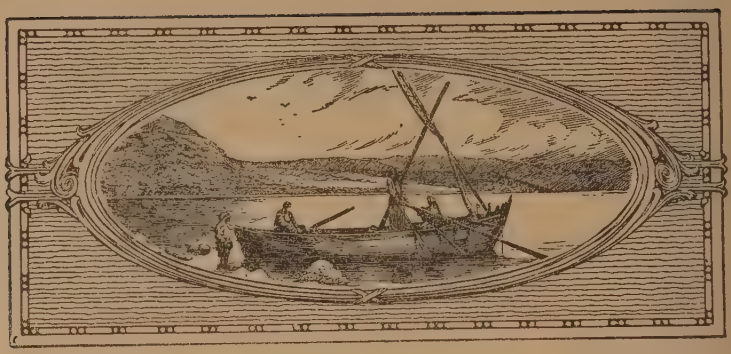
Stories of the American Navy

By Capt. E. L. BEACH

Ralph Osborn — Midshipman at Annapolis
Mipshipman Ralph Osborn at Sea
Ensign Ralph Osborn
Lieutenant Ralph Osborn Aboard a Torpedo Boat Destroyer

Price, $1.75 each, net

Complete Catalogue Sent upon Request



Sunday-School Teachers

Out of the most complete set of Biblical pictures published we have chosen with great care

Wilde's Bible Picture Set

Illustrating the International Improved Uniform Lessons for 1922
60 pictures in portfolio — 90 cents postpaid

Teach the Children in the Only Effective Way to Teach Children — by Means of Pictures

Think what these pupils are going to miss if you, as a Sunday-school teacher, do not bring to them this great enjoyment.

If the entire set is not desired, the pictures can be purchased in lots of ten or more at one and one-half cents each postpaid.

Wilde's Bible Pictures are printed on cards 6 x 8 inches. Price, One and One-Half Cents each, postpaid. No orders for less than ten received

Total List of Bible Pictures Comprises Over 800 Subjects

A CATALOGUE WILL BE SENT IF REQUESTED

Golden Texts

This popular little book contains the Sunday-school Lessons, Golden Texts, Bible Readings, Ten Commandments, Twenty-third Psalm, Beatitudes, Lord's Prayer, and choice bits of poetry for memorizing, etc. Bound in a very handsome cover. **Price, 7 cents each; $7.00 per 100 copies. Postage, 3 cents a dozen additional.**

Sunday-School Workers' Library

An Invaluable Assistant to Pastors, Superintendents and Teachers

By REV. A. F. SCHAUFFLER, D.D.

Ways of Working. Helpful Hints for Sunday-school Officials and Teachers.

The Teacher, the Child, and the Book. Practical Suggestions and Methods for Sunday-school Workers.

Sparks from the Superintendent's Anvil. A practical Helper for Every Sunday-school Worker.

Price, $1.50 each postpaid

By AMOS R. WELLS

Sunday-school Problems. A Book of Practical Plans for Sunday-school Teachers and Officers

Sunday-school Essentials. What Every Sunday-school Teacher and Superintendent needs the most in order to win success **Price, $1.50 each postpaid**

By MRS. M. G. KENNEDY

Our Boys and Girls. How to Interest and Instruct Them in Bible Study. 128 pp. Cloth. Price, $1.25 postpaid.

It is the summing up of the life work of this wonderful Bible teacher of little folks.

By HENRY TURNER BAILEY

The Blackboard in the Sunday-school. Price, $1.00 postpaid.

This book is replete with hints and suggestions to amateurs on the principles of drawing.

By FLORENCE H. DARNELL

The Blackboard Class for Primary Sunday-school Teachers. Price, 50 cents postpaid.

The author of this little book has hit the happy medium between practice and theory, giving just enough of both to enable one to draw freely and effectively.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL AND HOME DEPARTMENT REQUISITES

We have a full line of these supplies and shall be glad to furnish descriptive circular upon application

The
Canterbury Series
of
Little Gifts

Our Illustrated Catalogue this year shows a large and varied line of beautiful greeting cards, post cards, inexpensive calendars, booklets, etc., and will be mailed free upon request from our Chicago Office, Madison Terminal Building.